# TIDE MARKS

MARGARET WESTRUP

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BY

MARGARET WESTRUP

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## PART I

### CHAPTER I

PHILIPPA could remember being born, quite well. . . .

When she was about six years old Rabbie took her to Uncle Joe with her for a week's visit. This was a tremendous event and a great honour: Philippa, submitting to endless hair disentanglings and cleaning of fingernails, was duly made aware of these facts. She never forgot them, as they were each time impressed afresh upon her mind by a tweak or a jerk of the comb in her hair, which brought the tears to her eyes, but no further. So, clean and sleek and fat as to her small outer person, and crammed full inwardly with maxims relating to manners and behaviour, she sat at last for the first time in her life, in a railway carriage. It was then that she came out with the remark that set Rabbie blushing to her ears, and brought sharp pinches to Philippa's arm. For Philippa, sitting very demure and fat in her seat, lifted her adorable nose and sniffed.

"It smells jus' like the inside of the doctor's bag when I was borned," she said.

Poor Rabbie! After all her teaching and striving! It was she who shrank beneath the interested gaze of the three pairs of eyes that were turned upon them. As for

Philippa, she began to blush upon receiving Rabbie's anguished pinch, but her bright eyes glancing from side to side like some plump little bird's, happened to meet the eyes of the old gentleman in the corner, who was peering at her round his newspaper, and the blush was arrested. Philippa stared, breathless—surely—surely—he was laughing at her? A wink—a real friendly wink—Philippa gave a tiny shriek of glee, and at once amplified her remark.

"An' it jolts jus' like the doctor's bag did when he went hurry, hurry 'long the road——"

"Be quiet, Miss Philly! If you don't belong to behave proper I'll—I'll take you straight back down along!"

But Philippa, her delighted gaze on the old gentleman's amused face, rushed on, swelling with triumph. "He'd got to hurry awful, 'cause Mother wanted me so bad she was terbly ill——"

She stopped abruptly: the old gentleman had begun to read his paper again. Philippa slipped to the floor, and went across to the end of the carriage. She put her face round the edge of the paper, and said "Boo!" in a great, deep bear's voice.

The old gentleman jumped badly, and putting down his paper glared at her over it with a very red face.

"You—you naughty little girl!" he spluttered angrily. "What are you doing?"

"I was only tryin' to be funny," quavered Philippa, quite abashed.

"Oh, indeed! A very foolish thing to do! You're a naughty little girl."

Philippa went back to her seat beside the outraged Rabbie, and wept slow tears of disillusion and bitter disappointment. Even Rabbie loved her no more: she refused to speak to her: she was alone in the world. The two other occupants of the compartment, a dreary couple in black, sat and stared at her in chill disapproval. Philippa

decided that the man was like the devil, and the woman like the devil's wife. This thought interested her, and when Rabbie, relenting, offered her a bar of chocolate, she asked: "Rabbie, is the devil married?"

The chocolate was snatched from her hand with a furious whispered: "I'm sure I wish I'd never said I'd put you to Uncle Joe's!"

Philippa, pensively licking the brown smear the chocolate had left on her fingers, began to think that she wished so too.

But even when she said her prayers that night she adhered to her statement about her birth. In vain Rabbie admonished her, in vain appealed to her; Philippa, shivering in her nightgown, her knees sore from long kneeling on the uncarpeted floor, stuck to what she had said: she remembered being born quite well. It was unjust, but this childish confusing of imagination's pictures with facts, brought her the unenviable reputation of telling falsehoods. Rabbie, being soft-hearted, and wanting to enjoy her week to the full, forgave her, but with all the sternness of her sixteen years' chapel-going, looked upon her as a case for serious prayer and thought.

On the whole Philippa did not enjoy the week at Uncle Joe's as much as she had expected to, although she was much too polite to tell Rabbie so. She grew to look upon the little room with white lace curtains, and shiny chairs and table and sofa, as a prison. They called it the parlour, and Philippa recognised the fact that she was expected to think it very beautiful and to appreciate being invited to sit in there. This puzzled her a good deal, and she asked Rabbie once why she liked it. Rabbie's reply that it was the parlour and only used for important visitors, and she was proud to say Uncle Joe and Aunt Sarah knew a little lady when they saw one, hardly helped to elucidate the matter for the small brain. She took to dodging the invitation "Won't you come in and have a look at the album, my dear?" feigning deafness or urgent business, but

Rabbie's solid hand inevitably descended, sooner or later, on to the wriggling shoulder, and Philippa found herself dragged into the parlour, and planted before the hated album or book of coloured postcards. In the end the stuffiness of this parlour, which really went a long way to spoiling the week's visit, induced her to commit a sin which was to lay heavy on her conscience for many a long day. In after years this parlour, the album, and the sin she committed were all she could remember of her visit to Rabbie's Uncle Joe at Tregarnett. For years she was at intervals attacked in her dreams by the awful disgrace of exposure: she never lost the vividness of the likeness of the gentleman's smug face, whose nose she had defiled with a pin: she could see the very wart at the corner of his close-shaved lips, the curl of his whiskers, and—horror and shame—she could see the little track of pin-holes down the centre of his long nose. The fear of detection made her very quiet for the last two days, but on the journey home the delights of Tregarnett began to assume large proportions, and she thought only of the hens and pigs, and cows, and great farm horses. She went home in an odour of sanctity earned by her quietness during the last two days. Dimly aware of some connection between the smug-faced gentleman in the album whose nose she had attacked, and this newly-gained reputation for goodness, she conceived a contempt for righteousness, always beholding it in his guise, and so turning rebelliously from contemplation of it.

However, she left Tregarnett in the odour of sanctity, and in the train thought longingly of the horses and cows and pigs and fowls.

It was evening when she and Rabbie drove home in the cart hired from a farmer, and this drive was to remain with Philippa as one of the few poignant memories of her childhood. It was then that her small heart first felt the thrill of love for her home. When suddenly a gust of wind brought to her the smell of sea and seaweed something caught at the child's throat: her sense of smell grew so keen

that she murmured confusedly: "I can see the sea," and shrank from Rabbie's reproof, and the farmer's amusement. And in that moment of deep feeling she first learnt the sad lesson of strong reserve, and, hugging it to her, said no more. They drove on homewards up and down the hills, with the glimmer of grey rock amongst the green, and years afterwards that glimmer of grey and the smell of the sea were to come to Philippa with the ache of home-sickness. She sat quite silent, her hands—such fat little hands they were—clutching the basket of eggs Aunt Sarah had given her, and once the smell of the sea had come to her, she thought only of the moment when the horse reaching the top of the long stony lane, she would be able to see a strip of blue over the meadows on the left. She watched the horse's freckled ears go bob, bob, as he plodded up the hill; with a suggestion of the sort of epicurean hoarding of a delight that later on was so strong in her character, she forebore to peep, to strain and twist her neck in an endeavour to see sooner, but sat there, her eyes on the horse's freckled ears. Only once she spoke, and that was in the new instinctive impulse to hide feeling that in its strength was new also: she said breathlessly, just as the horse's ears topped the hill: "Why does he bob his head so?" And then she turned quite slowly—an epicure in joy at six—and looked away over the meadows to the sea. There it was—yes, and blue, very blue—; the fishing boats were out, and some of them were shooting their nets, and the sound of the halliards running through the blocks came up the hill to her. That sound remained to Philippa always as one of the most beautiful in the world. Great clouds, creamy white—golden—pink—a blue sea—wonderful tan sails—and then they were going bumpity bump down the lane on the right, and the smell of the sea was growing fainter. . . .

Up another lane, and at the top a square little granite house, with vivid blue smoke uncoiling itself out of one of the chimneys, and disappearing amongst the trees in the

little orchard behind on the slope of the hill. That was home.

And the figure that came in a swirl of dark draperies—a tragic pale face framed in dark hair—thin hands outstretched—the figure that came hastening to the gate—that was Philippa's mother.

## CHAPTER II

PHILIPPA, eating one of her own eggs as she expressed it, in the kitchen, with the ugly tortoiseshell cat on the chair beside her, forgot to grieve that her mother had locked herself into her bedroom upstairs. Once a gleam of firelight on the copper kettle recalled memory of a gleam of sunshine on the ring on her mother's hand as she had held it out at the gate, and she asked perfunctorily:

"Why's mother cross with me, Rabbie?"

"Oh, she belongs to be like that," was Rabbie's easy response. "She thought you didn't love her, you talking about the chickens all the time."

"I want to know why we can't have hens, and little baby ones——"

"My gar, you do some talking, Miss Philly! I'm just sick of you and your hens. Get on with your supper now."

Philippa, rather set up with having been in a train and paid a visit, replied primly:

"You are a very rude creature, Rabbie."

Rabbie's greeny-grey eyes goggled at her admiringly.

"You're some grand, aren't you?" she said defensively. "Perhaps you'd like me to put you to London, just to go and say 'How-do-you-do' to the King and Queen?"

This crushed Philippa, who sat in silence, red-faced and tearful, and embraced the ugly cat.

Her mother, relenting, came to her when she went up to bed.

"I will put her to bed, Rabbie," she said, in the deep grave tones that gave to her commonest utterance such a queer importance.

Her beautiful dark face bent entranced over the fat little body in petticoat and red stays, bent lower when Philippa stood only in short white chemise, and hid itself in her creased neck when she stood in nothing at all, ready for her bath.

"Oh, mother, I haven't had any proper baths at all, all the *whole* time, only pails, an' I don't like a pail——"

"My poor darling! You are glad to be back with me, sweet?"

"Yes. May I have smelly soap to-night, mother?"

"Yes, dear one. And I am going to bath you. You like me to bath you, Phil?"

The little dark head nodded vigorously.

"You don't go so hard as Rabbie. Oooh! All warm, mother!"

She stood, one foot outstretched over the shallow bath, just dipping in her toes.

"Is it too hot, Phil? Why don't you get in?"

"I'm goin' to in a minute, mother. Oooh!" She put in her other foot and stood, chuckling.

Her mother's dark eyes watched her with a queer triumphant sort of brooding.

"You're a beautiful child!" she muttered. "At least I've given him a healthy, beautiful child! He can thank my gipsy blood for her—not his anæmic constitution!" Philippa was paddling about with her toes.

"Why don't you sit down, Phil? You'll get cold."

Philippa turned her excited face—shining eyes, red cheeks—to her mother.

"I'm going to in a minute. I'm going to *now*. Oooh, isn't it lovely when it creeps all warm round you, mother?"

Presently her mother asked her:

"Don't you want to know how your father is, Phil?"

"How is my father?" Philippa said obediently, rubbing a forefinger up and down her slippery, soapy thigh.

"He is the same as usual, up in the clouds, looking over

your head till you feel you're going mad. Oh, he's getting on splendidly—your father, Phil! His rooms are crowded with elegant fools who think they can write poetry and paint pictures and compose music! Their test of true greatness is the world's scorn of their work!" She laughed bitterly. "They're very great indeed, according to that, I should think," she said.

"Does father write poetry and music and pickshures, mother?"

"Your father," she answered slowly, "dreams, Phil."

"*I* can do that," Philippa said.

"Dreams of the perfect woman he should have married," she went on unheeding. "The pale, cold saint at whose feet he could have sat, adoring! And he married a gipsy! Oh, God, he married a gipsy!"

With sudden passion, finding an outlet in a violent clutching up of Philippa, she seized her and stood her on the floor, and began to towel her with an energy that offended the child greatly.

Philippa opened her mouth and roared lustily: in intervals of roaring she declared that the soap wasn't sponged off, that her toenails hadn't been scrubbed, and that there was a smudge of dirt left on her leg.

"It's time you were in bed! I'll teach you to behave like this!" her mother cried, and smacked her loudly.

Philippa, furiously incensed, smacked back again, and her mother suddenly burst out laughing.

"Oh, what a little fury! What a spirit you've got, Phil! You get that from us."

Philippa slipped back slyly into the bath: her mother sat on her heels on the floor unheeding, the masses of her black hair unloosened about her face, a look about the thin figure of wildness—tragedy. A queer impression this woman gave as of one on a stage chosen perfectly for her part.

"Once I slapped him—I slapped him in a fury on his cheek. It left a red mark. And *he* didn't slap me back

again! He is too much of a gentleman. He ought to have beaten me, but he didn't. He didn't do anything. Just drew back, and turned and left the room. It was soon after that—only a week—when I ran away from him. You were to be born in a few months. I thought you should be born in the woods—only you and me, and the old woman. She's dead now. There's no one left that loves me——"

"The water's all gone coldy," wailed Philippa, shivering.

"That's how the world's all gone—for me. Come out, and I'll dry you."

It was not long after this that Philippa, being accused sometimes of untruthfulness, was seized with the idea of telling a lie. The accusation, quite unjust, put the thought into her mind. She stole a pot of jam from the larder, and took it down to a favourite lair by the stream, where she often lived as a mermaid. That jam is not a suitable food for a mermaid was ignored by her with the magnificent scorn she always gave to details.

"Now, Miss Philly, have you took a pot of jam away?"

Like a flash came the idea.

"No, Rabbie."

She watched results with intense interest: it was a new game, and very exciting. If Rabbie did not believe her—smacks—no supper—early bed. If she did believe her—no smacks—a pilchard for supper—bed, perhaps with coaxing, as late as nine o'clock.

Rabbie believed her, perhaps because, in spite of accusations of untruthfulness she knew that Philippa had never told her a lie.

"There now, I'm all of a widdle lately! I'd have laid my life there was three pots of strawberry left!"

Philippa went proudly away. She told another lie a few days afterwards: this new idea simplified life a good deal. When she smashed a favourite old piece of china of her mother's, she tood a moment, quailing and trembling: she dreaded her mother's uncontrolled anger. Then the

thought of denial came to her. They said it must have been the wind. Philippa thought it was very easy. Presently she told lies for a pup a farmer gave her: the pup stole and ate shoes and pulled things up in the garden: Philippa saved him all punishments that she could. She loved him much more than she loved her mother or Rabbie; she had never loved anything as she loved her dog. She thought of him all day long, she even dreamt of him at night. For his sake she braved the dark staircase and hall at that dread hour when no one in the world is awake, except the Things that live in the Dark, and night after night would creep down the stairs and into the kitchen, and picking up the pup take him up to bed with her. This was strictly forbidden, and it taxed Philippa's ingenuity severely to account for his presence in the morning. If she managed to wake in time she carried him back again to the kitchen before Rabbie was down. One day, as a punishment for some childish naughtiness, she was given only bread and water for dinner. Later she stole half a cold chicken and ate it ravenously, like a little wild thing, in her hands. Confronted with the usual question, she denied all knowledge of it, and went jauntily up to bed. She lay awake, waiting for her mother and Rabbie to go to bed, exerting a will that in some ways was unchildishly strong, to keep her eyes open. It was often very difficult—you kept sinking, sinking into pink clouds and cushions, and then you rocked on a seagull's back on the sea—and then. . . .

Piercing, horrible howls rent the night—Philippa leapt from the bed—she knew the voice—— Halfway down the stairs she recognised human scoldings and smacks. Something mad shook the child from head to foot; her eyes were like a maniac's——

She leapt at Rabbie—a wild thing——

"I'll kill you! I'll kill you!——"

She was caught from behind and held by her mother: she bent her head, struggling, kicking, and bit her hand.

Her mother laughed.

"The wild blood——" she said.

"He belonged to steal the chicken——" Rabbie's voice said.

Up in her room, alone, Philippa lay, a thing disgraced, tragically miserable as only a child can be. *She* had whipped him. She accused herself over and over again. She cared nothing for her mother's anger or Rabbie's horror at the lie she had told. By that lie she had got her pup beaten. There was no room for anything else: a terrible new sense of utter meanness was mixed with the heart-breaking self-reproach. Dimly, brought home to her as nothing else could have brought it, she worked out the idea of truth and honour, and what they meant. And all the time the pup's howls were in her ears. . . .

She would not go down and fetch him: she felt that she was not fit ever to face him again. She did not cry; it went too deep for tears. Presently the door creaked, something went tap, tap against it—an ecstatic tail it was—and with a bound the pup was on the bed, licking her face, turning head over heels, biting her hands and her feet. He licked all the tears away, a lot there were too then.

The next morning at breakfast Philippa gave him surreptitiously all her milk.

"He must be so thirsty; cry-drops are so *salty,*" was her secret thought.

It was only a few weeks later that the pup died of distemper, and in the childish, heart-broken grief lurked a vague, terrifying thought of judgment. To Philippa, really ill with grief, was borne the conviction that to tell a lie was a sin so black that no punishment was too great for it. For a while too was the pitiful memory of a beating administered undeserved, gaining, through the pup's death, a poignancy that only faded gradually with time.

## CHAPTER III

To Philippa, until she was fifteen, when her mother died, her father was a vague, somewhat awe-inspiring figure, connected always in her mind with the smell of yellow soap, and meals in odd places, at odd times of day. The hap-hazard meals she liked, and tolerated her father's visits, because of this heralding of them. Otherwise she would have disliked him, since they always meant tears, sooner or later on her mother's part, and violent affection and violent punishments for her small self. The one thing she liked about the visits, was the joy of popping out suddenly from behind doors or out of cupboards, upon her father, and seeing how badly she could make him jump. One visit always stood out clear and strong in her mind. It was when she was about nine years old. There had been the usual house-cleaning, the usual elaborate preparations, and she stood with her mother at the gate to receive him, quite half an hour before he could arrive.

"By gar, you're some fine, mother!" Philippa said, mischief dancing in her wicked eyes and lips.

"How dare you speak like that! Haven't I told you I won't have you speaking Cornish!"

"Rabbie says it," said Philippa nonchalantly swinging on the gate. Her mother did not answer: her brooding eyes were fixed upon her own person, her head down bent: one hand smoothed the soft dull gold silk of her frock. It was a frock he had insisted on her buying, years ago; she had spent hours during the last week altering it. Now she hesitated; suddenly she turned towards the house: "I'm a dressed-up fool!" she said, and went indoors. Philippa

heard drawers being pulled open; she came in and went upstairs to her mother's room. The yellow frock lay in a soft heap upon the floor; she saw her mother tread on it carelessly, as she hurried to the wardrobe. "Aren't you silly to take it off, mother?" she said.

"Go away, and don't worry!"

Philippa came further into the room, and picking up the gold frock wrapped herself in its folds, and paraded the room. Her mother took no notice of her, except to push her roughly aside when she got in her way. Just as the last hook and eye of the dowdy everyday frock was fastened they heard the sound of wheels jolting over the stones in the lane. Philippa threw the yellow gown to the floor, and went to the door; she turned inquiringly to her mother, who stood, her hand to her breast, her beautiful face alight with a passionate shy love. . . .

Years afterwards memory of that light showed Philippa more plainly than anything else, the tragedy of her mother's life.

Now she was too young of course to understand; she was impatient.

"Aren't you coming, mother? What are you waiting for?"

"You go, Phil. I—I'll be down in a minute."

Philippa went down the stairs and out to the gate, where her father was just dismounting from the cart. She gleefully seized the opportunity to shock him by greeting him with her broadest country accent. He was shocked; he was distressed. He came up the path remonstrating with her; Philippa, her hand in his, walked demurely beside him, answering his remonstrances with Rabbie's strongest Cornishisms.

And upstairs her mother leaned from the window—listening—hungering—for mention of her name. No question as to where she was; no thought or memory of her! So little she counted in his life. Well, she had known it already. But on every one of these visits of his the same

poor hope struggled to life only to lie dead again, ere he had been a day, sometimes an hour, in the house. Yet she knew that a word from her would materialize the hope, she knew that at a word he would live with her again. She knew that any time in all these long years since the night when he had found her with her baby in the little old cottage on the moors, he would have taken her back. It was she who would not go back to him. She who, tortured, driven mad with unsatisfied love, all her native wildness quivering with a new poignancy during those months before Philippa was born, had fled from him with only the old servant to help her. And on being found by him she had refused to return to her life with him. He had done his best to persuade her; he had an endless patience that drove her mad; an endless cold self-control that lashed her passion to frenzy. She wanted him to master her. She wanted him to seize her, hold her, refuse to let her go! She wanted him to drag her home! She wanted him to cry: "You've got to come back! I want you! I need you! I must have you! I can't live without you!" And he said gently:

"It would be so much better. We can try again. Perhaps the child will make it easier. . . ."

Easier! And her great heart was hungering for it to be a glory of love and joy—their life together—his and hers—— Easier! She refused to go back. . . .

Somewhere at the back of it, she was ashamed—with a sensitive shy shame—of her love. He possessed the somewhat rare combination—a poetical nature allied to an almost ascetic coldness, and he made her ashamed! It was the poetry in him to which the beautiful girl with gipsy blood in her veins had appealed; it was the cold asceticism that she revolted from day after day. Even in the first days of their love, when his nature was fired as high as it was capable of being, his dreaminess, his abstraction tortured the passionate girl who had never been taught the most elementary lesson in self-control. No, she would not go back to him. Only sometimes she went up to London, where he had rooms in

Westminster. Jealousy drove her to pay these visits, a burning desire which always, after hard fighting, had to be satisfied, to see how he was living, to watch the friends who came to his rooms. She never stayed more than a few days, and as time went on her visits almost ceased.

She heard Philippa call. "Mother! Aren't you coming down then?" with a strong lilt, and she sprang to the door, a wild-eyed thing, and locked it. . . .

That was how the visit which Philippa always remembered, began. Yet, in his dreamy way, Harold Hamilton had been wondering where she was—only the child's deplorable mode of speech had worried him, and he invariably responded to the thing nearest him at the moment, the result of a curious mental slackness. Philippa's remembrance of the visit was due to an incident which took place on the third or fourth day of it. Her mother had taken her down to the cove, which was the supremest joy of Philippa's life. It continued to be the supremest joy after that day, but there was a difference, for on that day was born in her a fear of her beloved sea, fear was mixed now with the deep love. It was a hot day, so hot that the sand burnt your bare legs, and Philippa, wriggling her toes deeper and deeper into the sand, thought with a delirious thrill that really after a bit you *might* begin to scorch! Her warm little heart went out in a burst of gratitude to her mother for giving her this day of such wonder and joy. She tried to stand on her head in the sand. "When Rabbie brushes my hair I shall hear the sand go pattering on the floor," was her joyful thought. Everything was joyful to-day. Except her mother. Her head still half-buried in the sand, Philippa peered up at her mother's dark brooding face.

Vaguely wanting to help, and being inquisitive and active-minded, and observant of most things, she said, still on her head:

"Mother, why don't you tell father we don't want him to come and see us?"

"And why should I tell him that?"

"Because we don't."

"Don't we? Who told you that?"

Philippa had fallen over into a sitting posture now: she sat and stared out at the intense blue sea: she was aware of lurking fury in her mother's voice. But she stuck sullenly to her point. "No one told me. I know it by myself. You don't like him much—nor do I," she spoke with the ruthless candour, the almost brutal scorn of conventional veiling, of which she was never quite able to break herself. She was conscious of a sudden scatter of sand—it went into her ears and eyes and mouth—she was seized up in her mother's strong hands. Dizzily she swung, blue sea and yellow sand swaying before her bewildered eyes. . . .

"You see that sea? I'd throw you into it—to give him pleasure! Like him! I care more for his little finger than for all your stupid body!——"

Afterwards it was all mixed up terrifyingly—whirling sand and sea and the passion of words in a wild voice shaken and hoarse. . . . She bore red marks on her body where her mother's fingers had clutched her, shaking her, venting a fury that was almost mad. It never entered her head to doubt the absolute truth of what her mother had said. She used to wonder sometimes what it would feel like to be drowned, since at any moment, she might be thrown into the sea. Once, in the dusk, terrified, she questioned her father.

"Would it give you pleasure to see me thrown into the sea, father?"

He looked up from his note book, where he was making notes for a sonnet. "What did you say, Philippa?"

But she had not the courage to repeat her question then. But on the last day, when he was leaving them, she asked it again, unable to keep away from the subject.

"Would it give you pleasure to see me thrown into the sea, father?"

"Well, yes, I think it would," he replied, putting on his gloves as he went out to the waiting cart.

Philippa shrank, white-faced. . . . "Don't tell mother!" she sent after him in a dry whisper.

"Eh? Why not? You think it cruel of me? But don't you want to swim, Philippa? All little girls should learn to swim, and I believe throwing them into the water is a very good way of teaching them, though perhaps somewhat too drastic for some constitutions."

He looked round; Philippa had vanished into the house long since, too soon to have heard the re-assuring completion of his remarks.

It gave her a terrible fear of the sea—her dearly-loved sea.—Years afterwards she was sometimes assailed with this fear, and the thrill of terror was quite uncontrollable while it lasted.

For the rest her childhood was not particularly noticeable. She was alternately petted and scolded with undue violence; she was taught to read and write by her mother in an erratic emotional way. She had no playfellows, the few children on the neighbouring farms being considered too far beneath her for her to associate with. Her father continued to pay his periodical visits, always preceded by the smell of yellow soap, and as she grew older there mingled with the thought of him a subtle contempt. She never lost it, although her mother beat her cruelly once, for voicing it.

And then when she was fifteen her mother died. She caught a chill on her journey back from London, where she had been to stay with her husband for a week. When she began to shiver and feel ill, she said to Philippa:

"I'm going to die, child. Shall you be sorry?"

It was a pathetic comment on the woman's wasted passion, that Philippa heard her unmoved.

"I'll give you a glass of hot milk in bed to-night, mother," was all she answered.

But this time it was no baulked passion making her mother melodramatic, no craving of her starved emotions

seeking instinctively for an outlet: it was the instinct that animals have, and that her gipsy forbears had had too. With the approach of death she grew strangely quiet and still; the fatalism inherent in her blood came out now; she accepted death, recognising its inevitability, and, animal-like, only wishing to be left quiet to die. She refused to give Philippa her father's address in London.

"I don't want him here," she said, and once she added: "It would upset him. He hates to be upset." She smiled queerly. "He might enjoy it afterwards—he would make a poem of his emotions."

As hour after hour of quietude passed Philippa, sitting beside the bed on which the still figure lay, was shaken with nervous terror. This mother who lay thus so quietly was a stranger to her; the silence grew to be a great looming presence. . . .

At the last she was alone with her mother: the nurse was resting in another room.

It was a very hot afternoon: Philippa sat beside the bed, fighting the nerve-racking silence. When a wasp came buzzing into the room, she welcomed it with a throb of relief; her eyes followed it desperately; when it neared the open window again she made a movement as if to rise, and bar its egress. The wasp flew away, and she sat back on her chair, her eyes glancing shrinkingly at the still white face on the pillow. . . .

The silence grew bigger, closer—it pressed upon her—she was afraid, horribly afraid. . . .

She moistened her dry lips, and began to count the white tassels on the counterpane—one, two, three, four, five, six—how still it was!—one, two, three—why didn't her mother move? Was she breathing?—Her heart thudding and pounding in her ears she bent and listened: she could hear nothing—the room went dark, then grew light again, and she heard her mother's irregular breaths. . . . She sat back, trembling, and the silence came closer—closer—it was suffocating her. . . .

Then her mother broke it: her voice coming solemnly like that upon the infinite silence possessed a power in itself to set Philippa shaking with nervous fear.

"Philippa!"

"Yes—yes, mother——"

"Come close, child. Kneel."

Philippa went down upon trembling knees. She felt her mother's hand rest upon her head.

"May you never know the curse of love!"

The words rang out clear and strong: her mother's dying words, cleaving and shattering the silence till it seemed to clamour and shriek around Philippa's shrinking ears. . . .

"Your mother is dead. Get up, my child."

Philippa tried to rise.

"My legs——" she muttered. "The curse of love——" she said—"the curse——" She gave a terrified cry, as the clamour of the broken silence burst afresh upon her with streaks and flashes of dazzling light. . . .

The nurse carried her from the room.

## CHAPTER IV

She resented passionately her father's coming to live in the little grey house where she and her mother had lived ever since she could remember.

Harold Hamilton felt her resentment, but lacked the initiative necessary to making a change in the life into which he sank on his wife's death. Bowed over the table through the silent meals he faced his young daughter and her brooding eyes: sensitively he felt the questions with which silently she faced him. He never answered them; yet it was his wife's death that had taken all savour from his life in London: now that it was too late he was filled with a weak remorse.

His mind dwelt continually upon the early days of their marriage, upon their first meeting. He grew thin and sallow, and Philippa told him he ought to take more exercise. He looked at her mournfully, longing to unfold the reason of his ill-health. Her eyes, wide, dark beneath frowning brows met his steadily: his gaze shifted, returned, sank. He went to the little room he had appropriated as his study. Philippa picked up a hat and flung it on her head: he heard her pass. "Where are you going, Philippa?" he called, and he did not know that he was moved by spite.

She halted, surprised.

"For a walk, father."

"You idle too much. I wish you to practise."

There was a silence; then—"Very well, father."

He had never interfered with her careless, solitary young life before: she was more amused than angry: she fancied she would win in the end. She went into the room where the piano, seldom used, stood against a damp wall: she sat down and began to thump out some simple exercises.

She thumped as loudly as she could, but presently rose, and going to the door opened it; she stood looking down at the handle thoughtfully then, with a shrug of her shoulders, turned the key so that it projected and stopped the door from closing. Then she went back to the piano and her exercises.

Her father, striving in his study, to put into a poem an elusive thought, rose at last, distracted, and called to her to close the door, having in the end to go to her as she could not hear his voice above the noise she was making.

"The door won't shut, father."

"Why not?"

"You try, father."

He tried.

"I must get a man—you should not thump so, Philippa——"

"My fingers need strengthening."

He went back to his study, and returned presently to tell her to leave her practising.

Philippa setting out for her walk thought contemptuously:

"I knew he'd never discover it was only the key!"

Occasionally he would tell her she had a button missing from her shoe, or that her hair was untidy, or that she should speak more correctly, but it never struck him that he had any duties to perform with regard to her. And Philippa led her solitary life, and prayed every night the same prayer: "Please, God, don't let me ever fall in love."

Nor did the awesome terror of her mother's last words grow faint with the passing of time; they remained in her impressionable young mind, as a sort of wonderful warning, and her nightly prayer was uttered with all the strength of her heart and soul.

Meanwhile her father wrote a long poem on his marriage: he divided it into parts, under the headings: "Meeting," "A Marriage of Love," "Estrangement," "Parting," "Her Death," "His Death in Life."

Sometimes, in his longing for an audience, he almost read it aloud to Philippa, but something deterred him: he was always conscious, in his intercourse with her, of a lack of appreciation on her part, almost a disapproval of himself, that made him peevish and irritable to her, so that his great charm—a particular gentleness of manner—was lacking when with her.

The poem was still unfinished when Rabbie, weeping, announced to Philippa her desire to marry the young man she had been courting for the last five years. It appeared that if she didn't do it now, the young man would go off and marry Lizzie Annie up to Trelithnow. "I'd never belong to leave you, Miss Philly, if 'twas anyone else but that stink! But her! I couldn't do it for my life!" So Rabbie departed, weeping, and her departure rousing Harold Hamilton from his lethargy of woe, he decided to return to London, taking Philippa with him.

He procured his old rooms in Westminster, and there Philippa lived a life more solitary than any she had yet known. The solitude in a crowd, coming upon the overwhelming impressions of her arrival in London, had the effect of a tangibility against which for a while she fought vainly, only to give in to it at last, feeling weak as from an actual conflict.

The wonder and noise of Paddington Station she met with exquisite thrills of answering excitement. No fear troubled her, something within her responded gloriously to the shouts and rattle, the banging down of trunks, the hustled porters, the whistling for cabs, the rattle of harness, the hollow clap clap of hoofs, the thud, thud, thud of a waiting taxi. Her eyes were here, there, everywhere to meet all they saw; she loved the yellow haze over it all; she loved the moving sea of faces, the cabs, the horses, the omnibuses. . . .

She stepped into a cab thrilling as if she were stepping her way to a wonderful adventure. . . .

Then came the days and weeks of solitude in a crowd, came along with all the vivid impressions and emotions

evoked by London. The suppression, the choking back of it all! No one to tell it to, no one to share the wonder.

Philippa grew sharp-featured, thinner than before; she became a prey to morbid thought: the memory of her mother's last words became a torture, the thought of love a terrible fear. Her instinctive response to a beautiful love in poem or story frightened her.

Suppose a man loved her? She was afraid of herself, afraid she might return his love. And then? Love in her family meant tragedy. Her mother had told her that. But she was too ugly—this, studying her face in the glass—"Yellow—bony" she said, "staring eyes!" Yet she took comb and brush and dragged her dark hair from her brow, leaving it all exposed, young, full of thought, an innocently worried brow. She was glad the few men who came to see her father were old and ugly. Love in connection with them was unthinkable: a nunnery began to fascinate her thought: she went often to Westminster Abbey. She liked to go in the evenings when the dusk deepened and wonderful shadows gathered, and the ache at her heart grew poignant with a piercing sadness. Always then she made up her mind to renounce the world, and to tell her father at once of her decision. But on the way home there were such things! The smell of hot buns that issued from the confectioner's at the corner. A man and a girl flashing by in a hansom—they were laughing, and she had on such a lovely cloak! And a woman with a great basket of pink carnations. The scent of them! The size! The colour! A puppy might run out at her from the second house on the left in Queen Street—a black pup with an absurdly long tail—a pup worth loitering for, so adorable, so loving.

Thoughts came—were pups allowed in an Anglican Sisterhood? For that matter—buns? Hansoms? Carnations?

She would tell her father presently—not just yet.

Bigger things loomed deterringly as she grew older: the pictures in the Tate, some of them growing into friends—

in the National Gallery too. Thoughts wrangled in her head—had God given that wonderful talent to man to be despised of men? Not despised—a Sister surely might go to the Galleries?

But something told her that a Sister must not give the sort of liking she was giving to pictures, or indeed to anything else. Standing in the grey street with the woolly black dog who had once been the long-tailed pup, the thought was abhorrent—to grow cold and colder—to love nothing but people—poor people—sick people. Philippa pitied both, but liked neither. Across the top of the grey street a stream of traffic passed, and the noise of it boomed incessantly: sometimes it was wonderfully beautiful—shapes and shadows in a yellow-grey mist—a gleam of light here—a glitter on a bit of harness there. Philippa liked to turn and watch it, it excited her curiously.

Then back to the house in Westminster, no dog, an irritable father who must not be disturbed. Thoughts of her mother's death to come and harass, fear of the thing her mother had prayed might not come to her. The Sisterhood seemed sweet and good and restful. Back to the Abbey, singing hymns with absorbed exaltation—Yes, she would become a sister, and grow cold, colder—that was the glory of it surely—to make oneself give it all up! The sacrifice—that was it. To love only the sick and the poor——A sweet picture!

And suddenly, all unaware, on a day in dull November the old, unflinching honesty swept it all down, and she stood in the grey street, alone, and saw it all for what it was!

"Father's daughter!" she told herself brutally. "Posing! Posing!"

She turned and looked back. Across the top of the street, through the fog, cabs, taxis, buses flashing by—a stream of them—lights swimming through the mist—noise—shouts—wheels—hoofs—someone whistling for a taxi. A boy shouting hoarsely: "Murder at Southend!" A woman selling violets. . . . And mingled with it all the suggestion

of girls' laughter, men's laughter—gay voices—flashing by in those taxis and hansoms, in the broughams. She heard these last only with the inner longing ears—the ears that make the heart ache—that always hear what the longing within must hear. . . .

Philippa saw it suddenly through tears.

"*That's* what I want!" she cried passionately.

And she laughed bitterly at the thought of the Anglican Sister. . . .

She went to her father, urged by the longing within: she stood before him:

"You are my father. You owe things to me."

It was out, trembling, afire with emotion.

"Please close the door, Philippa," he said peevishly, spreading out thin hands over his scattered papers. She moved slowly across the room and closed the door: she gulped down tears with a passionate wish that she had remembered to shut the door when she came in. Then she came and stood before him again.

"Why do you poke about amongst your papers instead of looking at me, father?" she burst out at last.

He looked up at her then, up at the thin young figure, the pale face and burning eyes.

"You're ashamed! Ashamed! Ashamed!" she said rapidly.

"Philippa!"

"You are! You *know* you've done nothing for me! And you owe it to me! What is my life going to be?"

"What you make it——"

"*I!* What idea have I of how to make my life?——"

"Philippa, I cannot be disturbed. You will ruin my poem——"

"Oh, your poems! You are fond of writing about fathers and children—the beauty of the relationship—— There's a lot of beauty between me and you, isn't there, father?"

He was appalled, unable to meet it: he felt confusedly that here was risen her mother in his young, quiet daughter. What was he to do?

"I'm rude to you, father. I can't help it. I—I want things. I must have them. I have nothing all day long —and the evenings—the glorious exciting evenings all music and flowers——"

"What evenings?" he said startled.

"Other people's evenings!" she said in a strangled voice. "I want them."

"Go away! Go away! I will think about it. I cannot be disturbed now. You are selfish, Philippa, and a very rude child."

"Child!" she said bitterly. "I feel a hundred years old!"

And he did not see the pathetic humour of it!

She went up to her room, and began to take out the few pretty frocks she possessed. One after the other she put them on, and studied her reflection in the mirror, studied it with frowning brow and sullen mouth. "How ugly you are! How hideous!" Suddenly she began to pull out hairpins till her dark, almost black hair fell in a long silky mass round her shoulders.

"Now, Miss Ugly, we'll try a different way of doing your hair."

She did it deftly in puffs and loose bits that should have been waves, and then stood staring sombrely at the result.

"You're a positive caricature now!"

She pulled it down again and dragged it back with vindictive tightness.

"We will now endeavour to quiet our mind with suitable literature," she said, and selecting a dull and old-fashioned book of English history she sat down and read assiduously. And then tears! Such pent-up tears they were, dripping, pouring, flooding the yellowed and musty pages. And a corner of the room presently for the book of English history,

flung there in a final passion of revolt. A hundred years old? She was very, very young.

So young that Christmas time that year proved unbearable. The climax came on Christmas Eve, came after weeks of stormy wistful passion. It was a cold evening with a slight yellow fog hanging about, hiding, revealing, for Philippa full of a wondrous light and mystery. The faces looming through it! The hurrying footsteps! The laughter and voices! And parcels—above all, the parcels! The hansoms bowling along, stopping outside the gorgeous shops with the rattle and jingle of harness!

The taxis flashing by, stopping, thud, thud, thud—all a-quiver to be off for other fares. The crowded buses, the tube entrances sending forth crowds and crowds—oh, the hurry and bustle!

The noise! The deafening medley of noise! Wheels, engines, whistles, hoofs, shouts—no use to try and label them. But the whole—what a glorious blur of Christmas rush and hurry! And the children—heaps of children—what toys for them! A man's voice loomed: "This beastly fog's thickening!" And a gay answer: "What's it matter?" And then laughter. . . . Philippa looked after them, went a few steps after them, heard the third voice say shrilly: *"I* like the fog!"—More laughter. Desperate now—should she call a taxi and speed through the traffic? Alone? Worse than nothing—that. No one was alone. and everyone was in a hurry—— Scraps of conversation—— "What on earth *shall* I get for Tom? Men are so difficult!"

"I shall never get through my list. I've forgotten the whole boiling of the Morley nephews and nieces! And there are——"

"Bobbie's my difficulty! I simply can't *stop*—he loves everything, and he's such a duck! Spoiling? Oh——"

"Mummy, you won't *look,* will you? It's a awful big——"

"Think Maud'd like pearls or opals best? She——"

"My dear, I'm a wreck! This awful Christmas shopping——"

Only she silent! Words climbed into her throat, choked her, she *must* speak! Pretend? "I shall never be finished tonight!" the words came in a little hoarse whisper, and she stood hot all over—— How stupid she was! What was the use of talking, if there was no one to answer? A breathless voice accosted her from behind, a nice, hearty, breathless voice—"Oh, I'm a beast to be so late! I simply—oh, I beg your pardon! I thought you were someone else——"

The cruelty of it! "I am! I am!" the words struggled to her lips, the stranger's plump face and fair hair swam in a mist of miserable longing. Why not go after her? Ask if she might shop with her just for half an hour? Would she mind? She looked kind and happy—there she was pushing her way through the crowd to the jewellers' window —the light from the misty yellow lamps flashed on her fair hair—she was gone—inside the shop.

Philippa turned, unable to bear it any longer. She would go home, home to a silent dinner broken only by polite remarks—"Will you have any more chicken, Philippa?" "More custard, father?" and perhaps a reference or two to the fog, the possibility of rain! Could she bear it? Surely God would see that she couldn't bear it tonight? Perhaps something would happen? Perhaps—through the fog—who knew? Something might happen—anything—who could tell? Through the fog—looming up—some adventure. Who knew? She stopped before a pallid, laughing flower girl and bought a great bunch of Parma violets: she gave her half a crown, and the girl shouted to another, laughing: "Wot price *see*-gars fer 'arry, eh?"

Philippa laughed too, and turned to meet her adventure, ready, eager—— Through the fog—round the next corner. . . . Ah, who could tell?

"Buy me some Parma violets to wear tonight, Dick."

A woman's pretty voice, and a man's answering: "Right you are, darling!"

Then suddenly she was deep in the game of make-

believe: an instinctive fleeing to a refuge. She would wear her violets tonight too: she must hurry home to dress for the theatre. Which frock should she wear? How should she do her hair?. . .

To the great woolly black dog who once had been a pup, it was: "You're a love, but I mustn't stop!" And then up in her room the fuss and hurry! The selection of the frock. The careful doing of the long straight hair, and the sudden inspiration that resulted in the ruthless demolition of the elaborate coiffure, and the ensuing neat little dark head—smooth hair—silky—coiled at the back—loose over the ears.

And then she stood staring at herself in the glass. A small pale face—dark flaming eyes—lips apart—a face so alive, so vital that it seemed a burning question——

"At half past seven I start."

And vaguely a thought pushed away that at eight she would have to go down and dine with her father—"The fog seems to be thickening." "I should not be surprised if it rains tonight." "A little more chicken, Philippa?"

No! At half past seven she would be fetched to go to the theatre. Cousin Andrew would come to fetch her, or perhaps that nice Mr. Fergusson of whom her father had spoken long ago. . . .

It did not matter that Mr. Fergusson had gone to New Zealand ten years ago, or that, so far as she knew, she possessed no cousins.

She had played this game before, played it up to the very minute she had to go down to dinner, and then had sat silent, eating nothing, sick at heart, a-fire with secret rebellion, her ears strained to catch the blurred noise of the traffic. Would it be like that tonight? Ah no, not on Christmas Eve!

A quarter past seven. Her violets! She pinned them into her frock. Where were her gloves? And her cloak? She laughed excitedly as she slipped the cloak over her shoulders. The cloak that had never been worn outside

the house! The pretty cloak that trembling, defiant, she had bought one day at Peter Robinson's, bought because she could not bear the thought that she was not quite ready and prepared for any adventure. She loved that wrap, loved its soft prettiness almost passionately; it stood for so much to her—so much! She stroked it now caressingly. She was ready. Presently she would hear the jingle of a hansom bell, then wheels—coming nearer and nearer—the horse's hoofs sounding muffled on the wood road—up to the door—or perhaps it would be a taxi whirling up to the house, and that exciting, hurrying thud, thud, thud. . . . She crept out on to the landing and listened. How silent the house was! All the lodgers had gone away for Christmas, all except her father and herself. The clock in the hall sounded much louder than usual; the coats and hats hanging on the stand looked like ghosts —ghosts of the lodgers who had gone away for Christmas.

Outside there was the blurred rumble of traffic, pierced every few minutes by the sharp whistle for a hansom or taxi, followed by the jingle of bell and sound of hoofs, or the hoot of horn, the whir of the taxi's passing, and maybe the thud of its waiting.

Each time a whistle sounded Philippa thrilled anew, and the colour flooded her face. She leant over the balusters, her thin young body pressed against the wood, her face tense with nervous strain.

Five and twenty minutes past seven! She could, by stretching, see the yellow face of the clock in the hall: she feared its steady black hands.

Somewhere in the basement someone sneezed loudly. Philippa jumped nervously; to her the noise was loud and alarming. It was Mrs. Harris, the landlady, she always sneezed like that.

Another taxi whirred past: then silence again. Her heart beat faster and faster; she leant forward, her hands clutched the balusters desperately: a childish prayer

sprang despairingly from her heart—"God—send something——"

She leant forward, staring at the clock, waiting—waiting till it should strike the half hour. Tick, tick, tick, tick—then the wheezy whir—it was going to strike——

"God—send—something!"

It struck, one hoarse note. Outside there was the jingle of a hansom bell, wheels drawing near, they stopped outside the house.

Philippa stood immovable, her face as white as paper. . . .

She heard the stamp of a hoof, the tinkle of a bridle as the horse shook his head, then light footsteps running up the steps, the peal of the bell echoing through the house—— She was down the stairs, had flung open the door——

A young man stood outside, he was whistling gaily, the light of a lamp glinted on his white shirt front and on his fair hair as he took off his hat: behind him looming through the fog she saw a shadowy grey horse. . . .

"Oh—I beg your pardon—do you know if a chap called Teddington's still here?"

"He has gone away," she said tonelessly. "Everyone's gone away."

He was just like the men she saw flashing by in hansoms and taxis and broughams with beautiful women—the hansom was out there—waiting—and he wanted Teddington!

"Except me!" he said ruefully. "Pity I've got two tickets for that ripping play at the Garrick. Thanks awfully."

He raised his hat again, he turned away—he was going. Beyond him the horse shook himself, and the jingle of the harness came to her through the fog. . . . And suddenly in her ears her father's cold voice: "Will you have a little more chicken, Philippa?" She shuddered away from it as if she had been struck. . . . Down one step—two—this man who was just like those others who flashed by and left her standing alone . . . a bit of that life—here,

at her door—and it was going . . . and in her ears her father's voice: "I believe the fog is thickening. . . ."

He turned: she was there on the step behind him.

"Take me!" she breathed.

"I—I beg your pardon——" he was staring bewilderedly into the vivid face almost on a level with his own as she stood there on the step above him. "Er—of course—awfully pleased—no end good of you."

He went on talking like that while he helped her into the hansom: he was very young and shy and exceedingly puzzled.

She heard someone close the hall door behind them: it brought no thought to her, only an added little stab of excitement. How often she had heard doors all down the street closing like that! And another door—of hansom or taxi—and wheels receding. . . . Now this hansom door would close—yes—there it was—he pulled the doors together—and they were off! She was off to the play! No coherent thought had place in her brain: she lived in the present, thrilling with excitement, feeling, but not thinking at all consecutively. The puzzled boy beside her did not exist for her as a personality, he was merely part of it all, a most necessary part. She hardly heard what he was saying: she did not know that once when he stopped she said: "Go on! Talk!" in an imperious voice that rather alarmed him. She gave the command from the instinctive wish to have everything as it should be. And in those hansoms and taxis and broughams they had always been laughing and talking. But he must do it. She could not. She sat silent, her hands gripped together in her lap, her reserve making her, quite unconsciously, act a part that effectually hid the trembling excitement that possessed her. She looked out at the people on foot with a passionate interest: she waited breathlessly to catch a glance, welcomed it with childish joy. They were saying—"There they go—off to the theatre!"

"Isn't it a lovely evening?" she said.

Her companion looked out at the fog and laughed.

"Might be worse, I suppose; the fog's hanging off all right."

"I love fog," she said.

"Do you really? Why?"

"I don't know—it hides things—all sorts of things."

"Oh," he said.

He glanced at her sideways, unable to understand her.

"Lovely violets," he said suddenly remembering her command, and hurrying into speech.

She touched them lovingly.

The driver opened the flap in the roof.

"Sorry, sir, did you say the Garrick?"

"Yes, of course!"

She looked up and smiled at the man's face peering duskily.

The Garrick! The Garrick!

"I like the Garrick," she said with an air. And laughed, for so she did like the outside of it, which was all she had ever seen.

There was a block at Oxford Circus; she was glad, glad with the old childish epicurean hoarding of a joy. Faces—white faces in the glare of electric light—pressed quite close all round: they looked in—some of them. She looked back with brilliant eyes, met all the eyes she could. Was that how her face had appeared to the people driving? Just a white blur with staring eyes? Well, she was not that now: she was going to play with this boy! This strange boy whose name she did not know! Vaguely a sort of unreal realisation stole over her. She laughed softly. She didn't care—didn't care—didn't care! Not she! She would never see him again. And he was just what she wanted for this evening. She had no room for shyness, for self-consciousness: it did not strike her then to wonder what he thought of her. Her own enjoyment, her own feelings, filled her world for the time being. She said suddenly to herself with defiance: "I've seized a strange young man, and made him take me to

a theatre!" Half-heartedly, true to her ruthless honesty, she strove for the minute to see it clearly. But it was impossible: in her exalted, overstrained condition she could see nothing clearly. She added: "I don't care! I don't care!" And her mind swung back dizzily to the glamorous evening.

A girl stood alone on a refuge near Piccadilly Circus, waiting to cross. Philippa met her eye as they bowled past. "Oh, poor thing!" she said.

"Who? Why?"

"That girl—she wants to go to a theatre. How lovely!"

She was glad that girl wanted to go to a theatre, and could not: it gave her a sort of pagan joy to think of it.

"Here we are!" he said. "Play's going strong—awful good play. Lots of people."

The hansom stopped: there was a long line of taxis and broughams and hansoms in front of them. She was glad again, hoarding—waiting. . . .

Lights everywhere! Dazzling lights. And voices—shouts—the jingle of harness and bell—thud, thud, thud of the taxis—shutting of doors. And the yellow fog, falling, lifting, hiding, revealing. . . .

The hansom moved on, stopped, on again, stopped.

"Here we are," he said.

She stepped out, stood on the pavement, took a great deep breath welcoming it all. A minute she stood there while he turned away to pay the driver. It was a minute she would never forget as long as she might live, a minute so crowded that it left her with a queer breathless feeling almost of exhaustion. But it passed, the feeling of weariness, and she went on, her head high, her brilliant young eyes everywhere, went on through those great swing doors, following and with all the pretty women in the pretty clothes. Gaily, copying them with intense realism, she tossed him laughing remarks.

"Quite a crush! The play's a great success evidently!" Oh, how she loved doing it! "Are you a lover of Bourchier?"

"Can one call that a hat and ask for its removal?" This with a nod at a very extensive head dress waving in front of them. Oh, what fun!

And then she was in her seat staring down at the programme he had given her. Over and over again she read the names, then she raised her head, and gazed at the curtain before her. She drew a long breath: it was getting very near now. She had never before been inside a theatre: her father disapproved of the modern stage, he did not consider its aim sufficiently high. She drew a long breath and sat very still; her talk and laughter dropped from her: she waited silently. . . .

The rest of that evening was afterwards a vivid memory of the play set in a blur of excitement and music. Once the curtain was raised the play became everything to her. In between the acts she ate an ice, listened to what the boy beside her said, answered dully, and all the while she was merely waiting for the lifting again of the curtain.

The boy was secretly thrilled too with the play; her absorption found an answering sympathy in him.

"Awfully jolly, isn't it?" he said every now and then; or it was "Ripping play, isn't it?" And for a moment she would meet him frankly, smiling. They did not talk much now in the intervals: he was obviously puzzled and ill at ease: he kept smoothing his hair with an agitated hand: he was terribly afraid he must appear a bit of a fool. But he was a nice boy, and his instinct warned him not to try to flirt with her; his clean-cut, open face grew ludicrously worried as the evening wore on.

In the interval before the last act he roused her with a sudden "Oh, damn!"

She turned and looked at him with eyes that hardly saw him.

"What is it?" she said vaguely polite.

"I beg your pardon, but it's my uncle—up in that box —thought he was in Ireland. Now he'll be bothering——"

He stopped abruptly.

"Does he bother?" she said.

"They always do—if they've been that sort themselves!" he retorted sulkily.

"Oh—do they?" she said sweetly, and went back to her dreaming, forgetting what had passed at once. But she remembered it afterwards.

During the last act the boy was fidgetty; he dropped his programme, and stooping to pick it up, laid his hand on her knee. She glanced down at him impatiently—Bourchier was speaking! He moved a little nearer, murmuring something about a draught—"Oh, don't fidget!" she whispered irritatedly. Presently he said in her ear: "Bet my uncle's envying me, eh? Well, he shall see I'm enjoying myself!"

She did not answer: she had not heard—the woman was breaking down—surely—surely. . . .

A little answering sob rose to her throat. . . .

"That girl's not half as pretty as you are!" he said boldly, but there was no conviction in his voice.

"Oh," she breathed, "oh, *can't* you keep quiet? I—shall go mad——" He drew back.

"I beg your pardon," he said stiffly. He did not speak again. When the curtain went down for the last time Philippa sat motionless in her seat. The orchestra played "God save the King," and everyone rose: she looked round her, and suddenly rose too. Her cheeks were pink, her eyes wet and shining. He helped her on with her wrap, casting a quick, defiant glance up at a box on the second tier: he bent over her:

"Are you tired?" he asked tenderly. She looked up, met his eyes, and suddenly her cheeks flamed.

"No!" she said turning abruptly away. He gave a little triumphant laugh.

"You don't look tired!" he said. "I'm going to have one of those violets presently," he added in a whisper.

She followed a stout pair of pink shoulders in front of her, and now she was conscious of the boy behind her: a sudden longing to get away from him filled her mind with conjectures as to how she could manage it. It proved simple enough: in the minute he left her while he fetched his coat and hat, she slipped out and into a taxi, and was whirled away towards Westminster. And now all the excitement had gone: she felt suddenly cold and tired and terribly frightened. What would her father say? Had he been anxious? Perhaps he had set the police searching for her! A little nervous laugh broke from her. And in the sudden realisation of what he would say of her adventure, hot shame sent the colour burning to her cheeks. Then it ebbed again in fear.

"What am I afraid of? He can't whip me."

Some echo of thought set a memory of passionate words throbbing in her brain. What were they? Bitter contempt was in them. What were they? "Too much of a gentleman——" that was it. "He ought to have beaten me, but he didn't——"

Her mother! She remembered now: she was having a bath—— Had her mother really said that? Thought it? Wanted him to beat her? She shuddered from the thought, and another thought came—stinging, lashing her. That boy—he had tried to flirt with her! She faced it. Why not? He thought she was that kind; of course he thought she was that kind. How could he think anything else? Wasn't she? If she could seize a strange man—insist on his taking her to the play—and *enjoy it*—yes—*enjoy it*—wasn't she that kind? Well, then, she was that kind of girl, and she had had one evening. She faced it obstinately, but deep down, some instinct was outraged and it gave her a horrible sort of feeling. She had had one wonderful, beautiful evening; she had wrested it from her dreary life: it had been worth it. It had been worth it. She said it over and over again to herself, angrily, fighting something—deep down—that hurt. Then she tried to dismiss it.

What did it matter? But for the moment the actors had grown blurred, and it was the boy's embarrassed face that was vivid. Absurd, of course. Why be so stupidly conventional? And she began to probe into the meaning of his embarrassment. . . .

She was very cold and tired: after all, it really did not matter; it was over, she would never see him again—— "My uncle—now he'll be bothering——"

What was that? She put her hands to her eyes—a red, sullen face—"bothering"—— And she saw the expression in his eyes at the end, when he had said "Are you tired?"

She dropped her hands, and sat up straight. What else was it he had said?

"Bothering—they always do if they've been that sort themselves!"

She gave a small cold laugh, and at the same instant her eyes filled suddenly with tears.

She understood what he had meant. Well. . . .

If the uncle did bother, she would be difficult to explain. Yes. Poor boy. . . .

Her anger had gone: she crouched back in her seat, her young pride in the dust.

The taxi stopped. She sat up and looked out: she was home, and the old childish fear shook her again: for a moment she sat there, too frightened to get out. Then she got up, opened the door and stepped out on to the pavement. When she told the chauffeur to wait while she fetched the fare, she had to steady her voice. Then the reaction came; she lifted her head: "I can always cow him!" came the contemptuous thought. "He's afraid of me. He won't know what to say or do. I will defy him."

She rang the bell and waited. And again she was afraid: the feeling that had made her cower in the taxi sapped the defiance curiously: it took something precious from her, it was as if it had destroyed the root of her courage.

She waited in the silent street: the taxi thud thud thudded behind her.

Was her father in bed? It was very late: she had seen a clock, she remembered, that had pointed to half past eleven. She lifted a hand that shook and rang again, louder this time. Almost immediately she heard footsteps coming towards her: the door was opened slowly, creakily, and Philippa saw her landlady standing within.

"Don't shut the door, Mrs. Harris, I must pay——"

"Hush, oh hush, my dear! Hush! Come inside——"

The whispering voice filled Philippa with sudden inexplicable horror: she stared fascinated at the woman's important, unctuous face. She stepped into the hall, and the house seemed to her full of horrible whispering voices, horrible peering faces, mysterious rustlings. . . . .

"What's the matter?" she said, loudly, harshly, and a murmur of horror sighed around her. She turned and looked angrily up at the stairs: shadowy faces bobbed and disappeared over the balusters.

"Hush, oh hush! Come in here and sit down——"

"What's the matter? Do you hear me, Mrs. Harris? Tell me what you're whispering and looking mysterious for? Tell me at once!"

"Oh, if *that's* how you're going to speak to me, and me doing all I can to break it gently, if you *have* been off till twelve o'clock at night with a strange young gentleman——"

It sounded very horrible—and a murmur went sighing round the quiet hall—"Poor Mrs. Harris! Shameless, *I* call her!"—murmurs like that, and outside the furious thud of the taxi. . . .

"Let me pass!"

Mrs. Harris found herself obeying the stern young voice, found herself drawing aside.

"Well, you can't say *I* wasn't willing to treat you decent——"

*"Be quiet!"*

It seemed to Philippa as she went upstairs that in the dim light of staircase and corridor faces and forms receded on all sides, and above the murmurs, a voice penetrated from

the hall below, a voice shorn horribly of all semblance of gentility—raucous, venomous——

"Be quiet, is it? Well, go and look at 'is dead body then! *I* shan't stop yer! And *you've* killed 'im! Don't forgit that, my fine young lady!"

For a moment there, at the top of the first flight, she swayed, and a form emerged and caught her elbow.

"Shame! You didn't know he'd take your going off to heart like that!"

Philippa shook it off, and went on, up the small flight, to her father's room. He was in there, on the bed, quiet and still: there was a sheet over him.

She stood beside the bed, looking down at the form beneath the sheet: she had not known he was so tall, she thought. She stood there. It was very quiet. Somewhere something worried her—after a while she knew that it was her taxi, the thudding of the engine: she must pay the chauffeur, and send him away.

She had not known her father was so tall. That was curious. It was very quiet in here: he liked quiet, he always hated noise: she was glad it was so quiet, only there was that queer noise—what was it?—It was the taxi waiting outside, she must pay the chauffeur and send him away. . . .

What a lot of silver-topped bottles there were on the table; he always liked perfumes and things like that; very delicate, of course, one never noticed it. . . . In his bath he liked them—— She wished that noise would stop; she wanted to think, she knew there was something she wanted to think about. Oh, it was the taxi—she must pay the chauffeur. She moved to the door and opened it noiselessly: outside those horrible forms seemed to slide and glide away before her, the light from the room behind her gleamed on a ghoulish face. Philippa spoke to it: "Will you go and pay the chauffeur, please? My purse is in the drawer—the left hand drawer of my dressing-table."

"Yes, miss, certainly, and if there's anything we can *do*—— The nurse who laid him out was called away—a beautiful corpse he makes. Doctor said as he was coming back——"

Philippa went back into the room closing the door behind her, shutting out another voice with a tearful whine in it: "My heart's breaking for her! To have your own father crying out for you when he's dying, and you out on the sly with——"

Back in the quiet room, standing there, looking down on the figure beneath the sheet. A piece of soot had been wafted from the fireplace on to the beautiful whiteness of the sheet: he hated soot, hated dirt in any form—she bent forward to brush it away, and suddenly, horribly she drew back her hand—she dared not touch him! And in that moment of instinctive recognition of her unworthiness, the whole truth and the meaning of it crashed down upon her. . . .

When the doctor came back he found her there, cowering on the floor, against the wall. She rose when he came in: "It's that piece of soot," she said. "I mustn't touch him. Will you take it away?"

He gave her a keen glance.

"You take it," he said gently. "He would sooner you took it away."

"Would he really?" she said wonderingly.

"Yes."

She drew near to the bed, and gently brushed the soot from the sheet, and as she did it she burst into tears.

Dr. Santon drew the sheet back, and Philippa, through tears, looked down into her father's face. Death had wiped the petty lines away, leaving only the wider, nobler expression; the peevishness, the consciousness of self, the egotism were gone. Philippa, looking, forgot everything, was conscious only of a desperate sense of loneliness, of longing to have him back again; the instinct of a

child's love for its parent, awoke again. She flung herself upon her knees beside the bed—"Oh, father—father——"

Dr. Santon went quietly from the room, leaving her there.

## CHAPTER V

THE days that followed her father's death were for Philippa a weary, shrinking, continual striving to do what people wanted her to do. The people were chiefly Dr. Santon and his wife; they took her away from the rooms in Westminster to their house in Collin Street.

They were very kind to her, (she told herself this very often) and of course she must try to do what they wanted her to do; that was surely only common gratitude. So she listened to Mrs. Santon's endless gossip of two other doctors' wives, and to her endless ambitions for her husband, which two themes, with their innumerable side issues were the only topics of conversation in which the doctor's wife took any interest. Philippa listened, and beneath the listening, there surged a terrifying sea of dread emotions, a sea that rose in great waves of horror, and was over-ridden again and again before it could break and carry everything away with it. Instinctively she over-rode, she dared not let it break; she feared it would sweep from her her self-control, her courage and reticence; she saw on it ghoulish faces, peering, leering; she heard whispering voices coming with it, and one, high above the others, screaming as sometimes at home she had heard one gull's voice rise suddenly in screaming anger above the others. . . .

It was some days before the doctor's sensible, common-sense voice really penetrated through this wave of horror: "It was his heart—quite sudden. He could not have missed you. He hadn't time to miss you. Your not being at home made no difference to him. I hope you won't get

morbid over that. It would be absurd. I'm sorry for you, that you were out, but for him it could make no difference. What's that? Mrs. Harris said he wanted you? Rubbish! Of course she'd say it. They always do. They love to pile on the agony."

It helped gradually, and then, when the horror was subsiding, it was the loneliness that appalled her. Her freedom meant as yet nothing to her, it terrified her. To have no one —no one in all the world! And feeling this, she yet cut herself adrift from the doctor and his wife; she was suddenly wildly unable to bear the atmosphere of politeness, of forced listening. It was her mother's blood in her, driving her to solitude, there to fight out her battle alone. They found rooms for her in an adjoining street, and there Philippa lived during the weeks she waited for an answer to the letter she had written to her only living relative, an aunt in India. She remembered how her father had one day given her this aunt's address, shrinkingly, distastefully, the thought of his death appalling him, as it always did. They had not corresponded for several years, he said, she and he had nothing in common. In those days while Philippa waited for an answer to her letter, she studied very earnestly an old faded photograph of a plump and placid girl, which was all she could find relating to this sister of her father's. "She looks *kind,*" she assured herself, and she began to see cousins. . . .

Then at last one day her answer came: she found it waiting on the hall-table when she came in from a walk. It looked queer: it was addressed to "Philippa." Surely that was very funny? And why—"On His Majesty's Service"? It—it made it very important. She gave a little breathless laugh, and took the letter with her up the long flights of stairs. Usually the stairs tired her, made her impatient, but to-day, she dawdled, she went up very slowly. "I can't open it till I get to my room, it's too dark to see to read it on the stairs," she said. And went on slowly. When she reached her room, she shut the door very carefully

and went and stood by the table, staring down at the letter she held in her hand.

There was a tap at the door, and Dr. Santon came in.

"I've only a few minutes," he said. "I wanted to tell you—Did you know that your father had invested nearly all his money in an annuity?"

"No," she said uninterestedly, and some impulse made her put her letter down face downward.

The doctor glanced at her sharply.

"I've been with his solicitors. I'm afraid you'll be very badly off——"

"Oh, I don't think so. Father had plenty of money, I believe."

She fidgetted with her letter.

"Yes, but he invested it in an annuity. He hadn't much really. All you've got will bring you in about thirty pounds a year. It was the most selfishly iniquitous thing to do! Thirty pounds a year you'll have. That's all."

"I understand," she said.

"I don't think you do!" he retorted impatiently.

At his tone she glanced up, and, back in that straining atmosphere of trying to do what people wanted, said politely: "It is very kind of you to take so much trouble for me."

"Oh, that's rubbish," there was an uneasy note in his voice. "Er—we don't see much of you lately. My wife has made some new friends—the Allardyces——"

"I know," she was still trying to do what was wanted of her. "He is an invalid, and Mrs.—one of the other doctors' wives—had got him for her husband, and you ought to have had him——"

"I don't know anything about that," the doctor looked angry, she thought wearily. "I must be off. I only had a few minutes. Well, if your aunt sends for you to go out to her, you'll be all right——"

"Thank you very much," she said, and wondered why she did not tell him that she had just heard from her aunt.

When his footsteps had died away she picked up the letter again, and slowly opened the envelope: her own letter to her aunt fell out—"Not known"—was added to it. That was all. Philippa read it earnestly: it seemed so funny to be reading her own letter. Then she went into her bedroom, took off her coat and hat. She sat down in the window, and looked out over endless chimneys and roofs and back-yards that went on for ever and ever till they were lost in yellowish smoke. The old sense of loneliness had seized her again: it seemed to her incredible that she could ever have valued her father's existence so little as she had when he lived. She shuddered from the memory of the last thought she had had of him before she knew that he was dead—"I can cow him. He's afraid of me. I will defy him."

She had said that! When he was lying dead, and—what had killed him? Deep down, fought against, there was the old horror of that screaming voice: "And you've killed 'im!" The nagging, terrifying thought—a weak heart—a shock perhaps? What shock? Was it the shock of finding that she——? But then how would he know that she had gone—as she had? Voices again—horrible voices: "Twelve o'clock at night with a strange young gentleman——" "Out on the sly——" How did they—know? Yes, know? Slowly, a vague memory took definite shape: it was the memory of a young man on the stairs talking to Mrs. Harris—a fair young man—a few days before Christmas Eve. Yes. She had passed them on the stairs—what was it Mrs. Harris was saying—"No, I don't *think* Mr. Teddington's going away for Christmas, sir——" That was it. And the young man was—that boy. And that was how they all knew she had not known him. Mrs. Harris must have come up to answer the bell, and had seen her—yes, seen her ask—beg—insist on his taking her to the play. And when her father missed her, she had told him, and—— She shuddered violently, and rising, paced the room rapidly, wildly. She had it clear at last—this horror she had refused

to think out before. And now she thought she could not bear it. Then the doctor's words: "No one can tell what caused it. Nothing specific. He might have died in his sleep—at any minute."

Then again—just now—what was it? "It was the most selfishly iniquitous thing to do." She caught at it: unconsciously her clear young brain was beginning to judge the dead man again, beginning to do it in desperate self-defence. Didn't that show that he had not cared for her much? And if he didn't care, would the shock—even if he had been told—of her behaviour be enough to—to——?

She clung to it. She was glad she had only thirty pounds a year. Yes, glad. And then it struck her to wonder how she was going to live. She went and sat down again by the window, and looked out on the roofs and back-yards. It was beginning to rain now, and the roofs were all getting shiny. She told herself she had got to face things, but she sat there limply staring out, and wondering miserably if people went mad when they were all alone in the world, without even an aunt in India. She must do something, of course, she must earn her own living—wasn't that it? She wondered why people left their washing hanging out when it was raining. One, two, three, four, five—no, the fifth was being taken in: she watched the untidy little servant hauling it down, and letting it trail in the mud and cinders. There were a lot of cinders in the back-yards. And cats. She wished they were dogs. Could she get a place as governess? Didn't governesses have to be very clever? Well, she wasn't clever. She wasn't anything that was worth anything. She wasn't even pretty. She was glad they weren't dogs really; she couldn't bear to see dogs looking so thin and miserable. She was sorry for the cats, but cats weren't dogs. Could she be some one's companion? Who on earth would want her? Why should anyone want her? No one did. No one ever would. . . .

And here Philippa reached the depths of dull misery.

She sat staring out at a line of dingy washing, getting dingier and wetter every minute. A vagrant breeze puffing its way in between the houses, set a pair of very stout pants swaying and curving, bowing with serious pomposity, twirling with dignified frivolity. . . .

Philippa suddenly laughed. Then she got up and put on her hat and coat again. She wanted to be out, wanted to face things bravely: the tension of her misery was relaxed. She went out and walked till she found herself in Chelsea, and finally in Battersea Park. The rain had ceased, leaving a moist, misty, soft air: she sat down on one of the seats by the river, and watched it winding, long, grey, silent—somehow lonely—it seemed to her.

She thought earnestly of the pants waving in the breeze: she recognised the fact that they had helped. Wasn't it proving what Dr. Santon had said to her? "Take *interest* in things. *Make* yourself interested in people and things. They're always interesting if only you'll trouble to find out how."

Those pants—big, patched, dingy—she would not have thought them interesting, yet when they danced—she smiled again—they were very interesting. This, she thought, was quite exciting. A stout woman came and sat down beside her on the seat. Philippa studied her absorbedly: where was she interesting? She was stout and red-faced, she wore a blue skirt, a black coat, and a black bonnet with a red rose in it. She looked at Philippa suspiciously, then relented sufficiently to say: "Lord, 'ow my corns are shooting! It's this damp weather."

Philippa listened, she forgot to smile or answer, so absorbed was she. The woman drew her thumb across her nose and sniffed: Philippa watched. The woman said with fierce jocosity:

"'Ope yer'll know me next time yer see me!"

"Yes, I think I shall," Philippa said, then, to draw her out: "Are you happy?" she asked earnestly.

"Oh, yus, Miss Hinquisitive, shooting corns make you

happy, don't they? Yer feel such a blooming sort of fairy, don't yer?"

Philippa, red and frightened, rose and walked away. The rain came down again, softly, insidiously, in a drifting mist: she felt suddenly very cold and so weary that she could hardly drag her feet along. She remembered that she had had no lunch and it was now past three o'clock. She made her way to a confectioner's in the King's Road, and ordered coffee and rolls. She sat at a small table waiting for her coffee: no one else was there: presently she caught sight of a white face frowning, glowering at her. For a moment she did not recognise it as her own. She looked at the girl sitting there, a white-faced, sullen-looking girl with heavy black hair under a black hat, a very plain girl and surely bad-tempered. She rested her chin on her hands and studied herself in the mirror.

"How ugly I am," she thought. "No wonder——" She watched the wave of red spread over her face to her chin. "Fool!" she said, and looked away. The fugitive thought had been concerned with the evening at the play, and, she thought now, the boy's boredom.

She ate a roll and drank some coffee. Two young girls came in, bringing with them a whiff of freshness, an invigorating suggestion somehow of work and happiness.

"What'll you have, Tommy? It's *my* tea! Don't be an ass!"

"You had the last, Tommy!"

Philippa forgot herself, forgot everything in her intense interest. Why were each of them "Tommy"? What were the things they had flung down on the seat? A sketch book. And that long shining round black tin thing was for brushes, surely? And one—the one with the fair hair and pink cheeks—had a little green serge bag that the other one—the little one with the frank face and bright eyes—teased her about.

"I say, Tommy, don't put your bag down! Suppose you lost it. Cakes, and toasted buns, eh? I

want something hot. I wish I could forget that thing I did to-day——"

"Mine was worse, Tommy."

There it was again—why were they both Tommy? Oh, how lovely it was to listen to them and look at them.

"You've painted your skirt, Tommy," this was the fair-haired one speaking, "trust you to do it somehow."

"I believe I should get paint on my *head* if I was a cherubim! Aren't you going to have buns? You *are* a rotter. They have horrid cakes here. Wish we were at Fullers, don't you?"

"Oh, Tommy, *rather!* And listening to the Gondoliers——"

"No; 'Yeomen of the Guard.'"

"N—no, I don't think so. I think I feel like the Gondoliers——"

People coming in, came between her and them. Craning her neck, she saw them both laughing till the one with the bright eyes had tears running down her cheeks. The one with the pink cheeks hid her face in her handkerchief: "Oh, *don't,* Tommy!" Philippa heard her gurgle. More people came in, so many that Philippa's place was wanted. She rose reluctantly, paid her bill, and went out. Her last look at them showed them still laughing, and the little one was making a cake with a bit of doughy inside of bun, decorating it with lumps of sugar and a crystallized cherry.

Philippa went out into the rain, musing. A passionate longing to be like those young girls made her heart ache. When she reached her rooms she went to the glass and studied her face wistfully. She smiled, laughed, she said to her reflection: "You *are* a rotter!" How nice it sounded! She wished she knew how to speak like that. The mischievous eyes of the smaller girl seemed to smile at her with frank comradeship. Philippa felt a wave of warm hope and courage come over her; she threw back her head, laughing.

"I *won't* be a rotter!" she said. And realised suddenly that all her life was before her; and with it came realisation

of her youth and strength: she sang: "You *are* a rotter! You *are* a rotter!" and added finally:—

"I *am* like them! Why not? I *will* be like them. Don't be an ass! You *are* a rotter!"

And smiling, set to work to word an advertisement for a post as companion.

## CHAPTER VI

PHILIPPA found nothing to do for several months. She had retreated to one room at the very top of the house, and set her mind to economising, but, even so, she found her money going in an alarming way. She grew to grudge the advertisement charges, yet, in spite of getting no success with them, dared not discontinue them. During those months she fought hard: there were many spectres to fight, the biggest of them being loneliness. In July Mrs. Santon found her employment as companion to a charming, elderly, invalid lady who suffered a great deal, and bore her suffering with a wonderful patience. She was tremendously wealthy and a patient of Dr. Santon's. This was the description given to Philippa by the doctor's enthusiastic wife. Philippa, full of kindly feeling and good resolves, set out to her work. In a few hours her clear young eyes saw ruthlessly a greedy old woman who habitually over-ate, and made herself ill. Her kindly feelings faded, but her good resolves remained, and Philippa, overworked, paid nothing, given, in exchange for menial work and cooking, nursing and amusing, a meagre board and lodging, stuck to her post till she received notice to give it up. Her dismissal came about through her indulgence of her mischievous sense of humour. The invalid lady liked to think that she could eat practically nothing, and Philippa, after a while, unable to resist the temptation, supplied literally what she was asked for. The lady, finding that when she had faintly asked for a wee slice of breast of chicken, a wee slice was brought to her, grew indignant, while Philippa enjoyed making her ask for more, and yet more. She carried it too far, however, when the lady, declaring that she

thought she could eat just a piece of egg, found half a boiled egg placed before her. Then Philippa had to go, and being young and adventurous, took her dismissal with a certain sense of exhilaration. But Mrs. Santon was very angry indeed, and practically washed her hands of her.

Philippa found her old room vacant, and went back to that and advertisements. But after two months of inadequate food and loneliness; two months of constantly overthrown hopes and plans, she welcomed with rather terrified eagerness, the advent one morning of a pink and strongly-scented letter in answer to an advertisement of hers in the 'Morning Post.' She read it several times:—

"Mrs. Smith, having seen P. H.'s advertisement in the "'Morning Post,' thinks P. H. would suit her. Mrs. Smith "would offer a comfortable home in return for light and "easy work, the knowledge of French being essential."

She put it up to her nose, and made a grimace. "Horrid smell, but at any rate it's different from the others. She *can't* want me to teach Hebrew and Latin, or to undertake Missionary work somehow! I'm glad it's pink, it looks nice and frivolous. All the others have been white. I wonder if she would give me enough to eat. I've an accumulated hunger within me." She pinned on her hat, frowning at herself in the mirror. "I don't think you look attractive. I'm sure *I* shouldn't want you for anything!" She read the letter again, striving, with rather a sickening anxiety, to read more into it. Then she put it into her coat pocket and went out.

"I'm glad it's Chelsea," she kept telling herself. "I like Chelsea. She is an artist, and I shall have to wash her brushes and keep her studio clean, and write for frames and things. I'd like to do that, I think. Only I wish she would give me even a shilling a week, I'd like to feel I was earning something." She walked along the Prince's Road in Chelsea, studying the shops and the coster barrows: she

counted the numbers till she came to the one that was at the top of the scented pink note paper. She stood still uncertainly, staring into a milliner's shop-window. It was a corner shop, with two windows filled with trimmed hats. And such hats! "The latest thing in French millinery. All one price—5/—in this window." And in the other the legend ran: "Sensational Bargains! All one price 2/6 in this window."

Philippa was thrilled: she had never seen such awful gorgeous hats in her life! She wondered who bought them. She looked up at the windows above the shop—oh, delirious thought, it was an actress living in rooms who wanted her. Of course. That accounted for the pink and scented note paper. Filled with an alluring vision of endless free seats at all the best theatres, she opened the shop door, and went in. A short, stoutish woman with a red face, and very loudly rustling petticoat, came forward. She wore such an unmistakably English appearance, that Philippa was astonished to hear the strong accent with which she spoke.

"Mademoiselle vish for ze hat, ness par?" she said, and showed large white strong teeth in an ingratiating smile.

"No, thank you. I have come in answer to a letter——"

"Oh, you're the young lady who advertised in the 'Morning Post,' eh?" she exclaimed with a disconcerting absence of accent. "Come along in here."

She led the way into a small room at the back of the shop: it was littered all over—chairs, table, machine, even the floor, with snips and pieces of silk, lace and velvet; bunches and wreaths of faded artificial flowers were obtruding from a cardboard box under the table, several felt and one or two velvet hats lay about.

"You don't look very strong. Are you sickly? Oh, don't get on your high horse. I don't mean to be unkind, but I simply haven't time to look after a sickly person. Lord,

there's the bell again. Look here, Miss —— you speak French, don't you? Good! Will you come into the shop with me, and you'll see the sort of thing I want you to do. All you've got to do is to answer me in *French,* see? Come along!"

Philippa, excited by the sheer bustle of the little woman, followed her into the shop delightedly.

"Here! Just pick up that hat and be examining it," she flung a hat to Philippa, and went round the counter to her customer, a big, florid, good-tempered looking woman neatly dressed in black skirt and mantle and bonnet.

"Good morning, madame, you vish a hat, ness par?"

" 'Spose I'd better say a bonnet, eh?" the lady returned.

"Not you! You aren't old enough for ze bonnet yet. You ask ze young lady——" here Philippa received an expansive wink—"Is zis lady old enough to wear bonnets, bon ami?"

Philippa replied demurely in French, to the florid lady's visible awed delight.

"Zere! You see! Oh, quel foolish! You do not understand French, eh? Zis young lady speaks it as natural as English. She has come straight from Paris with all the latest fashions in millinery. And I've got some stunners now! Let me see, what's your colour? Pink?"

"I like a nice bright pink as well as anything," the lady said shyly folding her hands in her mantle.

Philippa, thoroughly enjoying herself, mischievously told Mrs. Smith in French, that she was a wicked fraud and that her toupee was a bad match. She had a moment of horror after her impulsiveness, lest she had been too sure of the lady's ignorance of the language, but breathed again when Mrs. Smith smiled beamingly on her, exclaiming: "Oui, oui, oui," with tremendous effect.

She watched with dancing eyes while the stout and florid lady, tentatively taking off her black bonnet, and displaying a neat brown head with a tight knob at the back, and a row of curl papers in front, proceeded to try on pink hats. The mixture of common sense businesslikeness, and shy discom-

fort were thrilling to Philippa: she watched her hovering between a two and sixpenny red felt with a white wing and gold tinsel band, and a wonderful five shilling pink confection with a feathery trimming which dangled over the brim and on to the lady's fat neck at the back. After a quarter of an hour's indecision:

"I think I'd better look at a bonnet," she said, her eyes fixed longingly on the two hats of her choice.

Expostulations followed.

"Get out, why I'm a grandmother!" was the lady's response.

Philippa watched the energetic beguiling on Mrs. Smith's part, and the only-too-willing capitulation on the other side, until at last the large and florid lady walked out of the shop carrying a big paper bag, and a smile that seemed to take the whole world into its embrace.

"We're going to Southend for the week-end, me and my husband. I'm going to wear this pink hat I've got here," she seemed to be saying it still just as she had said it over and over again in the shop.

"Thank the Lord she's gone! Now, let's get to business. You're what I want. I can see that. You're pretty quick—the way you tumbled to that! I must tell Arthur. Now, what do you think?"

Philippa following her back into the other room gasped:

"I—I really haven't had time——"

"A yard and five inches. Have to do." She measured another piece of silk. "Time? There never is time in this house! Yard and a quarter. That's better. Sit down, won't you? I'll try to explain. Pass me that box of pins —thanks. Of course I can see you're a lady, and I don't pretend I'm one. But I wanted someone who looked like a lady anyway. It tells, even with the class I get here after my hats. And I wanted someone who could do a bit of parley-vooing. That goes a long way. It's an idea of mine. They love a bit of French. I can manage the accent, and a word or two, but I thought a young lady who could really

*speak* it 'ud be bound to fetch 'em. It makes 'em feel sort of smart and fine. But you wouldn't have to do a *lot* of attending to 'em. That reel of brown cotton, please. Well, I can't afford to pay a proper shop assistant—simply can't do it. Mary, is that onions you're cooking? Didn't I tell you no onions—*herbs*—for the pie to-day? Take 'em off at once! That girl'd eat onions till she dropped dead," she added in her normal voice again. "I suppose you're thinking it's pretty mean to get you in to do the work, and get no pay? Well, it is. I'm not denying it. But poor ladies will do things others won't. And it's pretty stylish —this sort of thing now-a-days. The Duchess of Strathmay has just opened a milliners in Regent Street. Seen it? A poke of a place. No idea of advertising——"

"Oh, do put this blue, instead of that red!" Philippa, who had been watching absorbedly, thrust a strip of blue silk across the table.

"Eh? Think it's better? Um—m—I've got the class of folk to think of! Well, all right. Now, are you on, or not? I'll show you the bedroom you'd have. Never mind, you may as well see it. Blow—I've dropped my thimble."

She preceded Philippa up the dark little staircase that seemed to share Mary's predilection for onions, her fingers running the needle through the piece of blue silk at a rate that fascinated Philippa, and her tongue never ceasing.

"There. You could share that room with my daughter Gladys—she's eleven—a beautiful girl, or this little one you could have to yourself. Plenty of blankets you see on the bed, and I'd get you a new water jug, if you don't like that one not matching. You'd share our dining-room and drawing-room. I'll show 'em to you. Come along!"

Philippa looked round the small, dingy, but scrupulously clean little room, trying to make up her mind. Mrs. Smith, still stitching, poked her frizzed head round the door. "Would you like to sit up here a bit and think it over?"

she said with an unexpected intuition. "All right. There's the shop bell!"

Philippa heard her footsteps retreating down the stairs. "Have you taken those onions off, Mary? What's baby crying for? I can't feed him for a minute. Stick a crust in his mouth. Don't forget the blanc mange——"

Philippa went and stood by the window, staring out over the busy grey, wonderful London. She debated within herself, but somehow she knew all the while that she would at any rate try this work: there was an atmosphere, at least of *life* here! It excited her, made her feel exhilarated, and it would be rather fun to play shop again! Sordid? Perhaps. Hard work? Probably. She really did not know yet what her duties were to be: the very vagueness of them appealed to her much more than a hard and fast, cut and dried routine could ever appeal. True daughter of her mother, her pulses thrilled with the mere uncertainty and unusualness of it!

She went downstairs ready to accept the post. And excitement brightened her eyes; excitement induced by the young imaginative glamour she cast over the drudgery before her.

"I'm beginning to live!" she said grandiloquently.

## CHAPTER VII

"Wot's for tea—wot's for tea—wot's for tea—wot's for tea——"

Philippa jumped, and stuck her needle into her finger. The door burst open, and a fat, handsome, dark, over-dressed child of strong Jewish type banged into the room. "Wot's for tea—wot's for tea—wot's for tea—wot's for tea—where's mother? Wot's for tea—wot's for tea——"

"Miss Hamilton won't answer, will you, Miss Hamilton?" A smaller child had followed her sister into the room—a sharp-featured, pallid-faced, red-haired little Jewess this—"Will you, Miss Hamilton?"

"No," said Philippa, "not while she makes that noise."

"Ho, Miss Stuck-up, shall make as much noise as I want to! Wot's for tea—wot's for tea—wot's for tea. Go on, Isabella! You do it too! Pooh, who's afraid? Go on, little coward! Afraid of——"

"Wot's for tea—wot's for tea——" Isabella sang shrilly.

"Lord, what a row!" Mrs. Smith came bustling into the room. "Be quiet now, there's good girls! The spirits of 'em——"

"Wot's for tea—wot's for tea——"

"Well, you guess now!"

"Plum jam!"

"No. Measure, Miss Hamilton, please."

"Sultana cake?"

"No. Get that done this evening, do you think? I promised it should be ready, and she's a good customer."

"Shrimps! No, muffins and crumpets!"

"That's it. Go and see if they're ready. Get along with you. What?" This to a long-nosed, handsome little Jew who appeared in the doorway. "Want him to come to tea? Who? Oh, Freddy Taylor—all right. Tell him to come in. Mary," raising her voice to a harsh shout: "Cut more bread and butter—thick. Seen that reel of green cotton, Miss Hamilton? What? Tea in here? Oh—you ought to have a rest——"

"You come along to the dining-room, Miss Hamilton," said Ferdinand, the Jew boy, ogling her with his great dark eyes. "Freddy Taylor's a bit of a swell, and awful smitten on the girls."

"He ought to have tea with the baby then, to teach him a lesson," Philippa said calmly.

The boy reddened angrily.

"Oh, we're mighty fine, ain't we? Shan't be allowed to speak above a whisper next, I suppose!"

"Silly little boy," Philippa said. "Mrs. Smith, did you say the rosette or the gold buckle?"

"Buckle. There's tea. All right. I'll send yours in. That hat's got to be finished this evening. Fetch your friend, Ferdy. Hand me that strip of trimming—I may as well get on with it at tea. *What's* baby yelling for? Mary, stick a crust in his mouth——"

Philippa, left alone, gave a sigh of relief: she went on, stitch, stitch, stitch, the click of her needle the only sound that broke the silence of the overcrowded, untidy little room with its gas jet flaring overhead, beneath the great black smoke stain in the ceiling. Presently Isabella came in with a clothless tray on which stood a cup of tea, a couple of pieces of crumpet and two slices of bread and butter.

"I've brought it instead of Mary," she said, dumping it down on top of a heap of red velvet.

"Thank you," Philippa said.

The child lingered, staring at her, while she performed gymnastics with a protruding tongue.

"I can touch my nose with my tongue," she said. "I

got top in history to-day! I'd got the book in my lap all the time."

"That was cheating."

"Rather! I'm too sharp for them. What you looking like that for, Miss Hamilton?"

"Like what?"

"Sort of sniffey. Wouldn't you cheat?"

"No."

"Aren't you a silly! That's all."

"You're not to be so rude, Isabella."

"Eh? D'you call that rude? Jerusalem, you ought to hear me sometimes! I didn't mean to be rude," she added, her sharp little blue eyes on Philippa's face. "If I *meant* to be rude I'd have called you——"

"Isabella! Come in and have your tea at once! What are you doing? And bring the measure with you."

Isabella seized the tape measure and ran out of the room.

"Why don't you curl your hair like mother does, Miss Hamilton?" she called out.

Philippa, alone, put down the satin band on which she was sewing sequins, and stretched her arms above her head: then she rose and stretched her body; went into the shop, and opening the door, stood for a minute or two on the pavement, gazing up and down the street. It was a cold evening; she welcomed the sharpness after the close atmosphere in which she had been working; she gave little thrilling shivers and laughed. Up and down the gaslit street she looked and in her face there was a certain satisfaction. At any rate this was life, or a phase of life: these people amongst whom she worked and lived were all alive: there was, to her, no lack of interest here. She found it everywhere: just now in the hurrying passers-by; the coster-barrows lit with their glaring lights, each one a little flare of beauty, there in the misty street—the fruit stall with the lights gleaming and shifting on the rows of bananas and apples

and oranges. Even the meat stall, away in the distance, was wonderful.

And the horse omnibuses that rumbled past: she knew most of the horses by now. One was coming down the street now, she could hear the rumble and the sound of the hoofs; it would be the bay and the grey—the poor old bony grey with the long, thin neck. Perhaps he had always been thin, perhaps it was only his build. The omnibus loomed mistily into view, there were a lot of people outside—yes—there was the fat man talking to the driver; he was always there at this time talking to the driver, and he always wore a buttonhole. He was going home to a fat wife and a grown-up daughter and son, and some younger ones, and he would have roast beef and cauliflower for dinner, and an apple pie. . . .

The grey was not so *very* thin really: he was raw-boned, that was it: he did not seem to find it difficult to do his share of pulling, only there was a look of endless patience about him—as if he had been pulling that bus for a hundred years. Well, the bay was fat enough, with great, strong legs, bless him. . . .

There was a coal cart—nearly a collision. The bus driver was shouting to the coal man. Oh, what was he saying? What was it? "—— —— —— better look out, or *your* job'll be over! They won't need coal where *you'll* go, my son! They burn everlasting stuff down there!"

Hell! He meant hell. She laughed. She was so glad she had caught it.

Oh, the hurry everyone was in! The jostling and pushing round the barrows. It was getting late. Presently —in an hour or so—Arthur would come in. There would be a different sort of bustle and noise then. Welcome—chaff—loud kisses—some awful pun probably, and perhaps, a crab for supper. No more work then: hats pulled out of your hands and tried on before the mirrors. Yes. Shrieks of laughter from everyone. Arthur was so witty! After

his hard day's work too! Never was such a worker as Arthur!

Then bedtime for the children. More noise—rebellion called high spirits—romping, practical jokes—it was a long time before quiet reigned again. And supper. Arthur, witty and kind—yes, he was always kind—Mrs. Smith talkative in snatches when Arthur permitted. And then her little room upstairs, a book and a fire. She paid for the fire, by the scuttle, and was obliged to propitiate Mary for the unheard of luxury, by trimming her hats for her.

Hard work? Oh yes, and at night so tired that it was little of the book over the fire she read. But who minded that? And the little drab clean bedroom had become a refuge: no one disturbed her there: it was an understood thing that once in there, she must be left strictly alone. She was allowed to have her meals there without question when she wished to, provided she carried them up and down from the kitchen herself. What was it Mrs. Smith said? "'Live and let live'—that's one of my favourite mottoes. We're all made different inside, just as we're different outside. That's a thing some folk never will realise."

So she said nothing, even when she did not understand; so long as Philippa did her share of work she was "let live!"

It made a difference—a great difference: she was grateful for her liberty. . . .

Presently,—now it should be the old lady in the beaded cape would pass by, with a shake of her head at the shop window, perhaps a mutter of disapproval. Once Philippa had caught the words: "These foreign notions!" That was lovely, she thought. Here came the girl with the eyes that didn't match, who so often came and stood staring in at the window: she was so thin and undersized and plain, so shabby. She was looking in now——

"I have a hat inside that would just suit you: you could have it for a shilling!"

The pallid, unwholesome little face flushed hotly.

"Would you like to look at it?"

"Yus."

"Come inside, will you?"

Glancing swiftly along the trimmed hats Philippa selected a neat, dark blue felt marked 2/6.

"That's the one," she said. "It—er—is slightly soiled. Would you like to try it on?"

"Yus."

The next minute she was staring at herself in the glass, but there was none of the pleasure in her face that Philippa had expected. She saw the ill-matched eyes furtively return again and again to a large showy red hat on a stand.

"It suits you beautifully," she said, glancing nervously towards the inner room, where she thought she heard a sound of someone moving.

"I s'pose I couldn't 'ave that one fer the sime?"

"No; I'm afraid not."

"Nor yet for one and—*six?*"

The breathless pause before the six conveyed a good deal.

"You can try it on," Philippa said weakly.

Now came the pleasure! This way and that way turned the great hat on the inadequate head. Mincing smiles, intent frowns, by turns, made the plain face plainer still.

"Lor, ain't it a beauty?" the undersized little figure wriggled in ecstasy.

"You can have it for one and sixpence!" And then the breathless rush and hurry to get it packed and away before Mrs. Smith should come in! And then the guilty creeping upstairs for the three shillings and six pence to put in the till! Life? Oh, it was certainly life.

"It must be so awful to be so ugly and skimpy as that!" was all the reason she could give herself for an extravagance she could not afford. . . .

She went back into the little room behind the shop: Isabella was there.

"What you been doing, Miss Hamilton? You look awful sly!"

"Rifling the till, perhaps, Isabella."

"What's rifling?"

"Stealing the money in it."

"Oh! You wouldn't do that. Shall I make Mary make you some fresh tea?"

"Oh, no, thank you."

The child sat down, twisting her skinny legs round the legs of the chair, and staring unblinkingly at Philippa.

"I'm trying to see how you eat, Miss Hamilton, so's I can do it like you."

"Haven't you ever been told that it's rude to stare?"

"Lots of times, you bet. But I'm staring so's to get polite this time. Why don't you curl your hair, Miss Hamilton, same as mother?"

"I like it this way best."

Isabella, deep in thought, stuck her forefinger up her nose: it was a habit she had. Philippa rebuked her sharply, and was surprised to see the pale little face redden.

"I only did it to help me think: it wasn't instead of a handkerchief," she explained earnestly.

"Well, it's an ugly habit anyway."

There was a silence: Isabella sat smoothing a piece of velvet.

"You had ugly habits when you were my age, Miss Hamilton?"

"Oh, I expect so."

"No, you didn't. You know you didn't. Here comes mother. Ask her to let me stay and help—*please!* I—I'll never stick my finger up again and I won't stare if you'll ask her, and I'll give you half of the chocolate stick I've got——"

"I don't want bribing, Isabella! When *will* you learn that?"

"What's that? Bribing? Who's bribing? Give me the scissors. Isabella? Well, I'm sure *I* don't know where those children get their ideas from——"

"She wants to stay here," Philippa said, looking at

Isabella's nose, and, retrospectively reviewing all the other Smith noses, and deciding that that was where they got their commercial ideas from.

"What for? You go and play with the others. Measure, please. Was that band to be two or three inches, Miss Hamilton? Run along, Issy, we don't want you, do we, Miss Hamilton?"

Philippa, looking down into a pair of staring light eyes, smiled. "I want her to take the pins out of that green and yellow hat."

"Oh, all right. Let her stay then. Funny, the way she likes to stay in here. Now you'd never get Gladys to do it. Bone lazy, Gladys, and that I always say, but beauties nearly always are. I don't know why. Issy's plain, and seems to act according—likes to make herself useful. Issy, run and see what sort it is," she broke off as the shop bell rang.

Isabella retired, and returned with her big nose expressively tilted.

"A half-a-crowner and *that* only for Sundays!" she said sharply.

Her mother nodded at Philippa.

"You stay here and get on with that; we shan't need more French than I can manage!"

She came back presently.

"It's that poor little thing—Mrs. Hind——"

"Why, she bought a hat about a fortnight ago."

"Trying to catch her husband again—that's what *she's* doing. Issy, come here and stand still now, I can't get this feather in the right place. She's gone all to pieces since she got married: he's a poor lot—Joseph Hind—Isabella, *will* you stand still!"

"I only want to see what I look like in it."

"Well, you needn't then. You're no beauty, my dear!"

"Miss Hamilton isn't a beauty either," the child said.

"Don't make personal remarks, Issy! It's rude and silly——"

"I *wasn't* rude and silly! I only meant——"

"You run along now. You're in the way. Go and play with the others."

"Miss Hamilton said——"

"Go *along!*"

The child went sulkily out of the room, banging the door behind her. There was silence for a little while, broken only by the click of needles, the sound of scissors, or a reel of cotton put down on the littered table.

"She'd been crying—that little Ethel Hind," Mrs. Smith said at last, snapping a piece of cotton between her large white teeth.

"Poor girl," Philippa said, watching the snapping enviously: she had tried in vain to do it herself.

"Can you reach that reel? Yes—she'd been crying. Where it is, girls will go into matrimony too rashly. It ought to be the same as choosing a hat. A girl comes into the shop, she tries on this hat—tries on that; she won't have this one because it don't suit her. She won't have the other because she thinks it won't wear well. One's too large, one's too small; one's got too much trimming, t'other hasn't got enough, or is the wrong colour, and so on. She spends a lot of time and thought on it. Well, that's how it ought to be with choosing a husband. But what's she do? A man kisses her—— Does she stop to think whether he'll suit her? Whether he'll wear well? Not a bit of it! She grabs hold of him, and there you are! When probably Mr. Right's waiting round the corner, just as the hat she wants is waiting behind the counter! . . . Think this bit of velvet's a bit too shabby to use again? Better keep it for the next sale p'r'aps. Seems to me husbands are just like hats. It don't matter so much that she's grabbed her man without stopping to think, if she's a clever woman. A clever woman can mostly make 'em the pattern she wants—same as with a hat. A hat don't suit you, or it don't go with the dress you've bought, well, you take it in hand—twist it this way—alter a bit here—a bit there. It's

just the same with men. You have to go gentle with the hats, else you'll break the straw or crack it, or something. Same thing with the men. Go gentle, or you'll have 'em jibbing and then you're done! Once a man guesses you're improving him, it's all up. You've always got to remember their vanity. It's their vanity that helps you—seen that strip of blue silk——?"

"I thought women were supposed to be the vain sex," Philippa said, handing it to her.

Mrs. Smith snorted and shot two pins out of her mouth.

"Lor' bless you, my dear, not them! All those old sayings have been made by *men,* you see, that's where it is! Why, a man's as full of vanity as an egg's full of meat. Take Arthur now. A better husband don't exist, look where you will. But I've done a good bit of alterations on him in my time, and I do a bit still now and again—just a pull here or a new bit there. And how do I do it? Why, through his vanity, of course! Noticed he's given up those old slippers that were in rags? Well, I'd begged him not to wear 'em, but he wouldn't give 'em up, for all I could say—he loved 'em, he said. So the other evening I said to him: "Mrs. Dobbs was asking after your feet to-day." Up he sits. "Eh? What's wrong with my feet?" he said. "Nothing," I said, "but she won't believe it. She says it always shows in the feet first—age coming on, she says, a man takes to old slippers—his feet feel hot and achy. It's a sure sign of age, she says, when a man takes to wearing shabby old slippers." "Oh," he said, "and may I ask what's that got to do with me, eh?" "Well," I said, "she's seen you wearing those old green and red slippers, that's where it is." Well, then he swore a bit at Mrs. Dobbs and her impudence, and he poked out his chest and swaggered—the way they always do when they're hit and know they're going to give in—and he swore he'd wear what slippers he liked, and he'd wear those green and red ones till they dropped off his feet, and so on—just the way they always do, they're all the same—and there it was, you see."

"But didn't he wear them any more then?" Philippa asked, looking up earnestly from under the brim of the hat she had put on to judge the place of a buckle.

"Bless you, no! Not him! He wouldn't put on those slippers now if the house was on fire, and not another pair to his feet! Not him!"

"But that was chance, wasn't it? What would you have done if Mrs. Dobbs hadn't noticed them?"

Mrs. Smith stared at her over the blue silk, and gulped.

"Good Lord, you nearly made me swallow a pin! *Mrs. Dobbs notice them!* Mrs. Dobbs never noticed them, lord no! *She'd* never have the impudence to speak to me like that about my own husband, and her's drunk every Sunday of the year!"

"Then—did you make it all up?"

"Of course I did!"

Philippa took the hat thoughtfully from her head.

The shop-bell rang loudly.

"Shall I go?"

Mrs. Smith winked at her.

"It's Arthur! Wait a bit."

From the shop came a high, squeaky voice,

"Do you stock shot hats with spots, please?"

A pause: Mrs. Smith had her hand over her mouth to silence her laughter.

"Stockez-vous shottez chapeaux avec spottezs, si vous play?" came from the shop, and then the intermediate door was flung open, and Arthur pranced in.

"Shockingly badly you attend to your customers, my dear! I met an angry old lady just going out—she said she'd been waiting for hours, and had asked for stocked spots with shots in English *and* French—— That's a gorgeous hat, Miss Hamilton! Tray cheek! Let me try it on. I say, Pops, how's that? Don't I look a little duck? Want to kiss me again, don't you now? How's it suit me, Miss Hamilton, eh?"

"You look like Isabella," Philippa said.

"Uh! Don't think much of that, Pops, do you? Gladys now! Or Ferdy! Or even juicy babs! However! Boys—girls—kids—children," he raised his voice to a shout. "Here's poor little puppy-pa come home, and no one to love him!" Answering screams and yells arose all over the little house; noisy feet seemed to come scurrying from everywhere. Above it all Mrs. Smith shouted to him to get out of the room before the children filled it, as they had work that really *must* be finished——

She managed to get him outside, and the door locked just in time, then came back panting and picked up her piece of silk. "We'll be done in a quarter of an hour, if we get along, Miss Hamilton."

Philippa nodded; she was listening to the noise outside in the little passage, the centre of which seemed to be a man's loud sobs. "Poor little puppy-pa turned out into cold passage! Naughty little Mummy-ma don't love him!" More loud sobs, shrieks of laughter and consolation. Then high above all the baby's strong-lunged wail. Mrs. Smith, emptying her mouth of pins, and sticking them recklessly into her stout bosom, hurried to the door.

"Stick a crust in his mouth, Mary! I can't come just yet! Arthur, tell her to stick a crust in his mouth!"

It was taken up as a chorus, and the voices retreated to the kitchen. A silence that was almost palpable after the noise, and that the continual roar and rattle and whiz of the traffic outside never seemed to break, descended on the hot little crowded room.

## CHAPTER VIII

ANNE FORSYTHE came into Philippa's life in a curious way. She was, in a sense, dragged into it by Philippa herself. It happened on an evening in the following March. Philippa had been at the little shop in the Prince's Road for four months, and the inevitable reaction had set in long ago. There were times when she loathed the work, the Smiths, even the fat baby with its everlasting crust in its mouth. At these times these aspiring Jews ceased to have any interest for her; she ceased to see anything funny in their determined efforts to be Protestant. Their frank vulgarity disgusted her; Arthur's wit got on her nerves; she had much ado not to descend to ignominious quarrels with Ferdinand and Gladys, who, in spite of their mother's command to let her alone, delighted in sly teasing. At times such a home-sickness for the sea, and the grey rocks amongst the green would come over her, that she nearly threw away her situation in her reckless longing to take a ticket and go back to Cornwall. One day she said broodingly to Mrs. Smith:

"I suppose it's because you get me for nothing that you want to keep me?"

"Not altogether," Mrs. Smith responded.

"Well, that horrible woman just now would have bought a hat if I hadn't been so impatient."

"I dessay."

"I lose you customers then."

"Maybe you do—sometimes. But you're a lady, and I like to have a lady about."

"I should have thought it would rile you—my being a lady," Philippa said plainly.

"Oh, no, it don't worry me, you being a lady. You're too far up, you understand. It's the *next* class above you that's always the worry, the one you want to get equal to, and feel jealous about. It's the same in everything. I've an idea we were made that way so'd we go on trying to get *on*. 'Cause as sure as eggs is eggs, if you get on into that class you've always wanted to, you begin worrying about the *next!* It's the same with everything. If I buy a new coat I don't get hoping folk'll think I got it at Peter Robinson's. I hope they'll think I got it at Lever & Wilson's. But if I *could* afford to get it at Lever & Wilson's I'd want 'em to think I got it at Peter Robinson's."

Philippa sitting limply over a hat looked at her, and thought she was a fool. She stuck pins in the hat languidly, and pulled them out again. The baby began to howl in the kitchen, and Philippa exclaimed: "Oh, what an awful baby it is!"

Mrs. Smith called out, unruffled, her usual order to stick a crust in his mouth, and in a few minutes went herself to him.

Philippa stuck more pins in the hat, then suddenly threw it violently from her into a corner of the room, and rose. She went up to her little room and put on her hat and coat. Coming down she found Mrs. Smith in the little work-room picking up the hat she had thrown to the floor.

"I'm going out," Philippa said.

Mrs. Smith's little eyes glanced at her sharply.

"There's those two hats promised by five o'clock," she said. "It's half-past three now."

"I know. I'm going out. Shall I go altogether?"

"Eh?"

"Would you rather I left you?"

Mrs. Smith was plainly flurried: she looked up uncertainly into the frowning cold young face: in spite of her former assertions to the contrary Philippa was a little too much the lady for her comfort just then.

"Oh, no—I mean—well, you might just as well have

*asked* if I could spare you, mightn't you, Miss Hamilton? I'm sure if it's pressing business you can go and welcome."

"It's not pressing business. It's nothing."

"Oh! Oh, I see. Of course. No, of course I don't wish you to leave me——" Philippa brushed past her, disappointment plainly written on her face: she would have welcomed dismissal at that moment.

She went out and walked. It was a beautiful afternoon: London was gleaming through its smoke, Spring-like in her own inimitable mistily glorious way.

Philippa had tea somewhere, then went on walking. At about seven o'clock she found herself in Hampstead. She turned into Abbey Row: it was very quiet and grey: all down the road on either side lights were appearing, they shone out on to the pavement. In a house half-way down the road someone was playing a piano: the rattle of a Venetian blind being pulled down came to her; a boy's voice called out in one of the little front gardens. She walked on slowly, looking in at all the windows where the curtains had not yet been drawn. Now and then she paused and stood gazing in: there were people in one or two of the rooms, and they enthralled her. She was very tired, and her aloneness was pressing down almost unbearably upon her. She felt a childish longing to get inside one of these warm, comfortable houses, to mix with these prosperous-looking people. One by one the curtains were drawn, the piano ceased, the boy had gone into his house; no one was in the quiet street but Philippa. She stood in a queer sudden panic, glancing nervously up and down the street. A light caught her eye, over on the other side, a little higher up: she hurried across the road, and stood by the palings, staring into the room. It was a pretty room; she saw flowers, and the gleam of books against the walls. It was empty; comfortable chairs with a great many cushions stood near the fire.

Philippa pushed open the gate, went up the steps, and rang the bell. Her mouth twisted in a little angry, defiant

smile; then as she heard steps approaching, ner courage failed, and she turned to hurry away. But almost at once she turned back. "I don't care. I will at least see what the hall is like!"

A neat maid opened the door, and Philippa's heart failed: she had made no plans, had acted on a sudden, mischievous impulse: she said breathlessly:

"Oh—can I see—Mrs. Jones?"

"Will you come this way, please."

Horror-struck, she followed the maid into the room with the books and flowers.

"What name, miss, please?"

"Miss Hamilton," she answered with mechanical obedience. The maid went out, closing the door. Philippa looked round wildly, then she smiled.

"I don't care. Her name shouldn't be Jones! It's *ridiculous* that her name should be Jones! I'm in the room. I'll ask for a subscription or something. What nice books. And lovely lilies of the valley——"

She prowled round excitedly, tried every chair in the room, and was sunk luxuriously in the biggest one before the fire when the door opened quietly, and Anne Forsythe came in. Philippa jumped up hastily, her face scarlet.

"Mrs. Jones is dressing. She's so sorry. She won't be long. I suppose you *are* from the Society with the prospectus?" She broke off, eyeing Philippa with a sort of pleasant puzzlement.

"N—no, oh, no! I—I want a subscription—that's all."

"I see," said Anne Forsythe and waited.

There was a silence: the clock on the mantel shelf chimed the quarter past seven: when it stopped the silence grew appalling to Philippa, but she stood tongue-tied by a new fear—suppose her request were acceded to, and she was given a donation? An hysterical desire to laugh assailed her, then she said, with an impudent desperation: "I want a subscription towards a fund for protecting the Kangaroo in Australia."

"Yes. Will half a crown be of any use?"

"We—we don't take less than a pound."

"Oh! I think I have a pound in my purse. I left it here somewhere."

She moved across to a bureau in the corner, and picked up a purse: Philippa watched her in silence, and in silence received the sovereign and stood looking down at it in her hand. Then she jerked up her head, and her stormy eyes met the quiet grey eyes of Anne Forsythe.

"Suppose I'd walked out with it?" Philippa said.

Anne smiled.

"I knew you wouldn't."

Something climbed into Philippa's throat, a desperate longing to cry nearly choked her: she stood staring at the clear, pale, kindly face before her. Then she put the money down onto the table.

"I'm sorry; of course you guessed. It was a silly joke," she said brusquely, and marched to the door. Anne Forsythe's voice stopped her—it was a very pleasant voice and capable of expressing a very honest kindliness—"I wonder, as you are here, if you'd mind just waiting while I write a post-card and posting it for me."

Philippa turned round.

"What for? You've plenty of servants."

It was very rude: she panted for something ruder yet to say.

Anne broke into a laugh.

"That won't do, evidently. Don't go—*please*. You know, I should be justified in calling a policeman. Won't you tell me why you invented the needy Kangaroo? What *did* you want to see Mrs. Jones for?"

"I didn't. I never dreamt she'd *be* Mrs. Jones! Except in a book—it's so funny——" Philippa began to laugh. "How could I dream Mrs. Jones would live here? I—I don't know why I did it quite. I'd been looking in at all the windows, and—and they drew all the curtains, except this room, and it looked so nice, and I got wild, and rang

the bell, and then I didn't know what to say, so I asked for Mrs. Jones——"

She stopped abruptly, frowning, hating to say even so much.

"I see," Anne said thoughtfully.

"I'm sorry," Philippa said, and turned again to the door.

"Your face seems so familiar somehow. What did you say your name was?" Anne's voice said in a matter-of-fact way.

Philippa turned: Anne was startled at the change in the almost sullen face: it was vivid now, alive, glowing. She could not know that again for the girl there was opening up the possibility of an adventure; she could not know that in that moment she was silently hailed as cousin! But Anne's intuitions seldom led her astray, and she followed up the altogether fabricated idea of a resemblance with energy.

"Philippa Mary Hamilton," the words dropped, one by one, from Philippa's breathless lips.

"Hamilton? Surely—your father——"

"He died fifteen months ago. Did you know him?"

"No, not I myself. But an aunt of mine—what *was* his name?——"

"Harold."

"Oh, yes, of course. So you are his daughter. My aunt is abroad, but I should like to see more of you—I'm staying here till Wednesday. I wonder if you would come and see me at my flat in Seymour Square—on Thursday? Come to tea, will you?"

## CHAPTER IX

"SOME day," Anne said, "I hope the 'Prevention of Cruelty to Children Society' will form a department for dealing with mental and spiritual cruelty."

Philippa, crouched up on a cushion before the fire, nodded her head thoughtfully. She had known Anne Forsythe for some months now, and had gradually unfolded a little of her life to her.

"Your father," Anne said, "was quite as guilty as the man who is imprisoned for starving his child."

"Oh!" Philippa said.

"He starved you mentally and spiritually."

Philippa frowned into the fire.

"It was more fun and frivolity he starved me of—I mean that's what I wanted—what I want now," she said brusquely.

Anne laughed.

"Oh, Phil, you're delightfully honest."

Philippa lifted her head with a jerk.

"I'm not! I'm a hypocrite. I hate myself for it."

"You?" Anne's grey eyes were amused: they rested on Philippa's frowning face thoughtfully. "How?" she said.

"I say things I don't mean. I agreed to-day when Mrs. Smith said Arthur had beautiful eyes. He has sharp little twinkly blue eyes, only she's so fond of him, and Mrs. Hill had made rude remarks about his nose!"

"You couldn't—with kindness—give her your true opinion," Anne said amusedly.

"She wouldn't let me be silent."

"What you call hypocrisy is very often the salve that oils life's wheels," Anne said.

"I don't like oil anyway, nasty, greasy stuff—it won't even fry fish without making such a smell you can't use it!"

"I consider you're rather too honest—that is, for this ordinary civilized life of ours, sometimes you're quite brutal."

"Oh, it's easy to be honest to the people you don't care about!" Philippa said naively.

"I wonder," Anne said, and paused.

"What do you wonder?"

"I was wondering what sort of man you will marry."

She was surprised at the sudden flame of startled colour that leapt to Philippa's cheeks; so surprised that she could hardly check an exclamation. She had not thought there was any man in Philippa's life; she could not believe it now; she was puzzled. Philippa did not reply, and Anne was silent.

After a while Philippa said restlessly, a trifle aggressively:

"Why should you take it for granted that I shall marry?"

"Because I hope you will."

"You're not married!"

Anne laughed.

"No, I'm not."

"Well, you're happy."

"Very happy indeed."

"You—wouldn't be so happy if you were married."

"Possibly not; possibly happier."

Philippa looked up at her with a childish disappointment.

"I've always thought you were so happy."

Anne smiled.

"So I am, you funny child. But that doesn't prevent my knowing that I might have the power of greater happiness still within me."

"I don't know what you mean."

Anne suddenly bent forward and stroked Philippa's head. Philippa was surprised: Anne was not at all a caressing woman.

"You've rather a nice little head to stroke, Philippa, it's like a smooth little cocoanut."

"I wish I were like you," Philippa said inconsequently.

"How? And for Heaven's sake, why?"

"It must feel so nice—make you feel so nice inside—to —to have the power of making—of making *other* people feel so nice—oh, I can't explain. I never can. Tell me what you mean about being happier perhaps if you were married."

"I meant this: I think that there is nothing quite so big and so—wonderful as marriage. I'm not talking of the ordinary——"

"No: the book ones."

"Put it that way, if you like. I think it must bring out everything that is in you—one way or the other—all your capacity for sadness and for joy. And I think if it is a happy love no one on earth, not knowing it, could be quite so happy."

Philippa was silent: Anne was puzzled by her expression of—was it distaste? Fear? What was it?

"But I have never met a man I could care for in that way," she went on. "I'm very fond of men. I've quite a lot of men friends, and two real friends. And I think I'm a very great deal happier as I am than I should be married to either of the men I could have married."

Philippa's reply surprised her: it seemed to her inappropriately childish. "Did two men ask you to marry them? How awful!" she said solemnly.

"It wasn't nice," Anne said curtly. "One was very painful—I was so fond of him. Still I suppose it's quite an ordinary sort of event."

Philippa shivered.

"Oh, I hope no one will ever ask me to marry him!"

"It is horrid if you don't care for him."

"Oh, I'm afraid that I might care!" Philippa blurted out.

"You mean, you don't want to get married?"

Philippa nodded: for a moment Anne caught sight of her face in the fire-light, and again she was puzzled.

"Why do you feel so strongly about it, child?"

Philippa was silent, her eyes fixed broodingly on the fire: suddenly in the red heart of it she saw her mother's beautiful passionate face; in her ears her voice, strong with feeling even in that last minute of life, rang: "May you never know the curse of love!"

She turned with a shiver and hid her eyes against Anne's knee.

"I don't want to get married. I don't want to care for a man," she said in a smothered voice.

Anne was silent: she was never a talkative woman.

"Why do you want me to get married? Why do you talk as if you think I will?" Philippa's voice was almost peevish.

"Because I hope you will. Because I think it would be the best thing for you. Because——"

"What? And it wouldn't be the best thing. I want to be free and independent. I—I should *die* if I—I—— What else were you going to say?"

"Shall I say it, Philippa?"

Philippa lifted her head defiantly, and looked into Anne's face.

"Yes."

"Well, then, because I think you have it in you to love a man with all your heart and soul, child."

Philippa sprang to her feet: her eyes had dilated, the colour flooded her face again.

"I haven't! I haven't! I should hate him! I haven't!" She was walking up and down the room. "Why do you say that, Anne?" she asked piteously. "Oh, I wish you hadn't said that!"

Anne rose, too, and stood looking at her.

"Philippa, there isn't—you don't mean——"

Philippa met her eyes, then laughed in a breathless sort of way.

"Good gracious, *no!* Oh, no, thank Heaven, and never will be!"

"I wish you would tell me why you feel——"

"Oh, it's only that I haven't any taste for matrimony," Philippa said carelessly.

"Somebody coming," Anne said. "I hope it's Dick Charters."

"Mr. Brent," the maid's voice said.

Philippa hung back shyly in the shadows: for a moment she forgot herself as Michael Brent entered the room, just for a moment she thought inconsequently that he was Bourchier. Then she saw that the likeness was very slight. The next instant—not yet recovered from the effect of her talk with Anne—a thought darted terribly across her mind—suppose she fell in love with this man? She went forward in answer to a word from Anne, red-faced, awkward, quite silent.

"I expect Dick this evening. When I heard your ring I was sure it was Dick," Anne said.

"Really?"

There was rather an awkward pause.

"Do sit down," Anne said. "That chair is very comfortable."

"All your chairs are," he said.

"Hasn't it turned cold?" Anne remarked. "A fire in July! One can never save, even on coal, nowadays."

"No," he said absently.

His eyes were trying to pierce the shadows where Philippa sat, like a shy, obstinate child refusing to come out and be polite.

"I came about the fund for the Penrudden fishermen," he said abruptly. "Are you interested in fishermen, Miss Hamilton?"

"I don't know much about them," Philippa said.

He drew a paper from his pocket.

"Er—it's rather dark. Do you mind if I switch on the light, Anne?"

"Oh, no," Anne said.

He switched on the electric light, then turned deliberately and looked at Philippa. He saw her in her corner, a slim girl in a white frock, with a dark head, and a pair of grave young eyes in a pale face. He frowned and bent his eyes to the paper he held in his hand.

"Lord Hardington has promised us a hundred pounds—with a condition," he said, flapping the paper against his hand.

"Are the Penrudden fishermen the ones who had their boats all smashed up in harbour?" suddenly inquired Philippa.

"Yes, poor beggars."

Philippa came forward.

"Oh, I wish you would explain. I couldn't understand it a bit in the Daily Tale."

"You'd be a genius if you could. Their sea chap never saw a boat or a fisherman in his life, I should say. It was a most curious thing: there had been no great wind; one of the men woke at about three o'clock, and heard a tremendous surf outside against the island and the pier. He turned out—in a few minutes they'd all turned out. It was like a breaking cliff over the pier, they say, and a tremendous run in the harbour, the boats were surging and straining. It was about half an hour before high tide. You should hear the fishermen describe it. I wasn't there, but I've been down since. They went off to the pier head to try and get the balks down. They swung out the first one, dropped it into the slots, and it was no sooner unhooked than the sea came in and lifted it right out—carried it away: they got the second into place, and the third on top of it, swung out the fourth, in came a big sea, lifted out those two and took them right away down to Penloe. Well, the next balk was too long, you see—jammed—they got in two on top of that, but

there was nothing beneath them to break the wave—they got the full force of a big wave and smashed. Awful hard luck. You see, by that time a lot of the boats had parted and gone adrift; two of the big mackerel drivers were running loose in the harbour, smashing things right and left. A few of the boats held on, but most of them were badly damaged. It's the height of the pilchard season too, poor beggars."

"And Lord Hardington's condition?" Anne said.

"That no fisherman receives anything unless he first signs the pledge!"

"Oh, what a pity!"

"I won't agree to it," he said concisely.

"But a hundred——" Anne hesitated. "The money is coming in so slowly, Mike."

"I won't have it," he repeated.

Anne was silent.

"Well, what do you say?" he asked abruptly.

"I can't decide off hand like that!" she said, and Philippa was surprised to hear the irritation in her voice. "To me clothes and food seem to balance the possible hurt to their feelings."

"Their feelings? I'm thinking of mine."

"And you think your feelings worth all that?"

"How are you thinking of yours?" put in Philippa again.

He frowned impatiently, then catching sight of her intensely interested face, smiled kindly.

"I've principles, Miss Hamilton. Old-fashioned, I know, but I've got them. I rather cherish them, and this thing would go dead against them."

"Would it? How?"

"Jam, with a pill—beastly mean sort of advantage to take. Give with one hand, and slap your face with the other. Like springing a hymn or a sermon on a lot of folk at a dance. Like—all sorts of objectionable things. A gift with conditions becomes an insult, and an insufferable thing to accept."

Philippa nodded thoughtfully.

"It's true, isn't it, Anne?" she said.

"Oh yes, from our point of view. Whether it's not being hyper-sensitive to refuse a hundred pounds!" she ended with a little shrug.

"I won't do it," he repeated.

"You think the safe-guarding of your pride worth it?" Anne said, flushing a little.

"I do. I refuse to see my name heading this thing under those circumstances. You and I are the parties, of course, to accept or refuse this donation. If we don't agree I will withdraw."

"Shall you withdraw your money, too?" Anne said, and Philippa felt a little shock of hurt surprise.

"That's not up to your usual style, is it?" he said shortly.

Philippa grew hot: she decided that she did not care much for him.

"I thought you might consider it detrimental to your principles to give to the same cause as Lord Hardington," said Anne, and bit her lip at her foolishness in descending to self-justification.

He explained with a cool patience. "No, not at all. My objection is to be known as the leader, the organiser, the moving spirit of a fund that is to be dealt out in a peculiarly insulting way, and a way directly opposed to my principles; I don't even wish the fishermen to become teetotallers. I don't wish any lot of men to become teetotallers—only a particular case here and there. If I wished all men to give up drink, I should be a teetotaller myself, which Lord Hardington certainly is not."

"He has the self-control which these fishermen lack, and never drinks too much."

"They have the control that comes of wrestling with the sea for a living!" he said brusquely. "Drunkenness is not at all common amongst them. Lord, who's to blame a chap for taking too much occasionally, when you think of the hardness of his life?"

"One doesn't blame them," Anne said. "But one wants to put it out of their power to get drunk."

"Does one? I don't. I think the pleasure of a mug of beer or a glass of whiskey is worth an occasional lapse!"

Philippa was shocked: he met her expressive eyes and laughed. She felt a curious anger with him because, when he laughed there *was* a far-away resemblance to Bourchier. "You're not nearly so nice," she said to herself. "And you're colder and cynical. You're not a bit like him, except the way your face creases."

"Well," he said to Anne, "can you make up your mind by to-morrow?"

"Yes."

There was a pause: he was looking again at Philippa.

"Know my nephew well, Miss Hamilton?" he said, folding up the paper he had held all the time.

"Your nephew? Oh, no," Philippa replied.

"Dick Charters is his nephew," Anne explained. "Miss Hamilton has never met him," she added.

"No? Well, I must be off," but he stood frowning at his paper. "Dick coming here to-night, did you say?"

"He won't come now. He told me that if he weren't here by nine, he wouldn't be coming. Someone has a most wonderful model, and Dick is sometimes allowed to do pencil studies of her in the evening, I believe. His pencil," she turned to Philippa, "is exquisite."

"He's a lazy young scamp. Good-night."

When he had gone Anne drew her chair closer to the fire.

"He has made me feel cold," she said.

"Don't you like him?" Philippa asked.

"Oh, yes! We are real, good friends—he and I. I've known him for years."

Philippa smiled.

"What's the 'but' Anne?"

"Well, hasn't everyone a 'but' attached to him somewhere?"

"Most people have heaps, I expect."

"His particular 'but' is hardness, I think. He's too hard on Dick; he never makes sufficient allowance. I won't plead the artistic temperament; that is usually a cloak for slackness and weakness and self-indulgence, but Dick *is* an artist, you know, and he can't work like a machine. I like Dick, he's a real nice boy, and very clever. Michael's his guardian, you know. Dick's *not* lazy! Oh, Philippa, that's the Professor's voice! I don't feel a bit like him to-night."

"I think I'll go, Anne——"

"I hope I did not hear you speaking of going, Miss Hamilton? I am exceedingly worried. My paper on Renaissance phraseology refuses to be written. The human brain is a most curious thing: I really think I need consolation to-night." He smiled benignly down upon them; Philippa shivered with a sharp recollection of a similar plea one night in her father's room at Westminster. The Professor had been one of his rare visitors: Philippa had known him slightly for several years; on one occasion he had brought her a box of chocolates.

"There is a comfortable chair, Professor," Anne said.

"Thank you, thank you. All your chairs are comfortable, Miss Forsythe. I sometimes question how far one should allow mere comfort or discomfort to affect one's work. It seems derogatory to the work to allow a badly-served meal to interfere with it, derogatory to one's self-esteem, yet—I confess it with shame—domestic worries do affect my work. Strive as I may against their perfidious influence, I fail! Yes, I acknowledge that I fail!"

Anne laughed.

"Does that mean that the new housekeeper isn't a success?"

He screwed up his eyes in his kind smile.

"Yes, my dear, I am afraid it means just that. A terrible

confession, is it not, for a learned man of letters? Philippa, you will respect my secret, will you not?"

Philippa nodded: she liked him the better for his weakness.

"What does she do?" she asked.

He lifted his hands.

"What does she not do? She possesses the essentially—forgive me—feminine power of what is vulgarly spoken of as putting them all by the ears! All the servants are in revolt. My cook sent up an almost uneatable dinner. When I remonstrated she sent me the reply that 'Them was her orders!' Ah, daily do I wish my good and valued Mrs. Thinger had never married again!"

Philippa rose, and Anne smiled mischievously when the Professor gallantly rose, too, to escort her to her destination.

At the private door of the shop in Princes Street he held her hand in his, and spoke very kindly.

"You are experiencing a very hard time, Philippa. I admire your courage and perseverance. I want you, my dear child, to remember that I am an old friend. I regret greatly that I lost sight of you for so long. My research work took me, as you know, abroad. Will you promise always to remember that I was a friend of your father's?"

"Yes," Philippa said.

The Professor, standing beneath the street lamp, smiled down upon her gently. It was a beautiful night, stars glimmered mistily through the smoke, the scent of sweet-peas came in little whiffs to them from a flower stall near by. Philippa was touched.

"You are very kind," she said.

He shook his head.

"Poor little lonely child!" he murmured.

Philippa's eyes filled suddenly with tears: it was such a beautiful night, and the thought of the little oniony staircase, and perhaps the baby would be crying—"I am going

to get you a bunch of sweetpeas," the Professor said. "The scent is really very beautiful."

Philippa, hurrying up the oniony staircase with the sweetpeas pressed tightly to her nose, wondered remorsefully why she had never considered the poor old Professor in any light but that of an unmitigated bore.

## CHAPTER X

ANNE had tried to find something more suitable for Philippa to do, although Philippa had told her plainly that on the whole she preferred her present humble occupation to that of companion.

"They interest me," she declared stubbornly. "Arthur is an endless source of wonder and awe to me. His spirits are marvellous; nothing quenches them, not even Mrs. Smith's bad headaches! The customers are quite thrilling. And Mrs. Smith is a mine of hard-headed wisdom."

Of the days when she hated it all she made no mention: she clung nervously to the place, afraid of what she might find if she ventured forth. And Anne perforce let her stay there, since she found it extremely difficult to discover any post sufficiently attractive to make it worth her while to leave the little milliner's shop.

Nevertheless Philippa was offered other work, which she accepted, and for which she received remuneration.

She came back from a walk one evening and found a letter in Professor Elkington's handwriting awaiting her. She took it up to her room with her: it asked her if she could possibly manage to come to his house every morning for a couple of hours to copy out his notes: it assured her the task would be no easy one, as she could judge from the present specimen of his writing, but he would be very grateful if she would undertake the task, as he found it impossible to work with an uncongenial spirit in the room. He told her very earnestly that the lady typists he had tried had all proved detrimental to his work, and that he had always found Philippa's a soothing influence. He wound up by

assuring her that her handwriting would do quite as well as typing.

Philippa put down the letter and laughed: it struck her as exquisitely humorous that Professor Elkington should hail her as a congenial spirit. Still she recognized the kindly impulse that had dictated the letter, and she went down to the dining-room for supper determined to ask Mrs. Smith if she could let her have two hours off in the morning. She found no one in the dining-room except the three children. Gladys and Ferdinand were whispering and looking sly, while Isabella pretended to look at a book of post cards, her large ears on the stretch all the while, her sharp little face baffled and furious.

"Gladys tried on your hat this evening, Miss Hamilton!" she said breathlessly, as Philippa entered.

"Don't care! It's not much of a hat anyway," observed Gladys.

"All the same you're not to do it again," Philippa said sternly.

"She'll be a jolly sight prettier than you when she's grown up, Miss Hamilton," put in Ferdinand. "Shouldn't wonder if she don't become Mrs. Frederick Taylor some day, eh, Gladys?"

Gladys giggled and tossed her black head.

"Freddy said he'd never seen a pair of finer eyes in his life!" Ferdinand went on.

Philippa took no notice.

"He said too that he'd never seen an uglier girl than Issy!" added Gladys.

Isabella's pale little face flamed; she turned a pair of anguished eyes on Philippa.

Philippa said unexpectedly:

"You've a nicer little face than Gladys, Isabella, so don't you worry."

Isabella said nothing: she bent her head over the post-card album.

Gladys shrieked with laughter, and fingered her black

curls. Ferdinand whispered loudly something about birds of a feather.

Arthur came into the room walking with a limp.

"The smell of supper in the kitchen smashed my leg," he said. "Onions—spell it with a 'we,' Sammy. Potato pie, *Mary* calls it! I should confer upon it the cognomen of condensed stinkatum—Who goes there: Halt! The bell at the private entrance. Jimmy Brown for a wager——"

He pranced to the street door: the children crowded after him inquisitively.

Philippa heard a voice—a pleasant voice, not the sort of voice she expected at all—ask if Miss Hamilton were in. Surely she knew the voice?

"A gentleman to see you, Miss Hamilton! Oh, isn't he a swell?"

"King of England isn't in it?"

"Mr. Brent to see you, Miss Hamilton," said Arthur's voice. "If you'll wait a minute I'll light the gas in the drawing room."

"Anne wanted a note delivered to you to-night, Miss Hamilton," said Michael Brent, coming into the room. "I was coming to Chelsea, so brought it."

"Oh, thank you," Philippa said.

"I'm to take her an answer, I think."

Philippa opened the note:

"Dear Philippa,—Come to the Lyric to-morrow evening. Box there and two men. Bearer, one, the other Norman Ford. Don't just send 'yes,' I want a nice note. I've got the feeling deep down that women aren't as decent as men. I get it sometimes, and hate it. So remind me what a particularly decent female child you are.

"Anne (idiot)."

The awful joke of the signature—worthy of Arthur himself—was so unexpected, and at the same time so thoroughly characteristic, that Philippa laughed out.

"I'll go and write an answer," she said. "Do you mind waiting?"

"Not at all. I'm in no hurry."

She went up to her room, and wrote to Anne.

"Look in the glass and you'll see a female so decent that she beats all the men ever created rolled into a lump," was one of the things she wrote.

When she brought it down to the dining-room she found no one there but Isabella.

"He's in the drawing-room with father, and Gladys and Ferdy are listening outside the door. *I* haven't listened, Miss Hamilton."

"I am glad to hear it, but I should be gladder still if you weren't so fond of telling tales, Isabella."

She went along the passage to the drawing-room, hearing a scurry of feet as she approached. She opened the door and went in. Michael Brent was sitting in one of the uncomfortable highly ornamental tapestried chairs with Arthur in its replica opposite. He rose as Philippa entered, and Arthur rose, too.

"I was just asking your friend if he would share our humble supper, Miss Hamilton, and this room would be at your disposal afterwards."

Arthur was a gentleman, after all; the occasion was one very specially adapted to bring out all his most excruciating wit; it was, in fact, the sort of occasion that always made his fertile brain fairly overflow, but he refrained; his tone was quite grave and polite.

Mrs. Smith bustled in in a hastily put on blue silk blouse; Philippa, amused, felt really sorry that she had forgotten to put on her waist belt. To her surprise Michael Brent accepted the invitation to supper, and they marched into the dining room in solemn silence, and sat down before the savoury potato pie. For once Mrs. Smith's agile tongue was still: Philippa saw her casting nervous glances at Brent's shirt front: presently she rose: "If you'll excuse me a moment, Mr. Brent, the girl's forgotten the serviettes,

and I'm so afraid of that beautiful shirt front of yours!" She hurried from the room, unheeding his expostulations: they heard her voice in the passage: "Now run away, d'you hear? *No,* you can't come in to supper to-night. You must have it in the kitchen—oh, what you like——" She came back with only one napkin in her hand.

"The laundry hasn't sent them home this week, Mr. Brent, but here's one for you. It's left from Miss Wilkinson—she was here to supper last night—such a nice woman, I'm sure you'd like her, and such a lady. There, if you'll just tuck that in—now I feel happier."

Brent, thanking her earnestly, tucked the napkin under his chin: his blue eyes met Philippa's over Miss Wilkinson's serviette, gravely.

Mrs. Smith, recovering a little from her nervousness, smiled expansively upon the company.

"I do call this real nice and homely of you, Mr. Brent. Arthur, Mr. Brent's glass is nearly empty. Put a head on it. I always like a head to my beer."

"There'll be a foot to your bier too, Martha," Arthur said, beginning to let himself go.

Brent smiled: Philippa saw him smile, and was astonished.

"Fond of a joke, Mr. Brent?" Arthur inquired. "So'm I. Chap said to me to-day that I ought to keep a book and write my jokes down, have 'em published—'No more Dull Evenings! Wit for All!'—that sort of title, you know. 'Bound to sell,' he said. I replied 'All books are bound to sell—what else d'you think they're "bound" for!' Believe I'd joke in church, if it wasn't for Martha there! She keeps an eye on me. Rare one for church she is!"

"You like going to church?" Brent turned to her courteously.

She nodded her grey-brown frizzed head vigorously.

"I couldn't tell you exactly why I like to go so much, Mr. Brent, but I do. It isn't that I'm religious, and I don't go to look at the other women's clothes, but somehow I like

to go. I like getting into my best clothes, and the smell and the warmth of the church. I like the hymns and the psalms—it gives you a sort of comfortable feeling to sing as loud as you can. I'm not religious, but I like church, it's so orderly and comfortable—I sort of feel there *is* someone looking after things a bit somewhere—a sort of policeman who'll look after you and your property a bit so long as you don't break the law. Oh, I'm a great churchgoer. It gives me a nice feeling to go along to church and sit in my own pew and come home to roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, and a nap after it. That's my Sunday, and I like it!"

"A good, old, typical English Sunday," Brent said.

"You're not one of these move-with-the-times gents then, Mr. Brent?" Arthur inquired. "What do you think of these Suffragettes now?"

Philippa looked at him interestedly, awaiting his answer: she could gather nothing from his face. He looked up and met her eyes; he smiled amusedly.

"It's too serious a subject to discuss with this delicious —er——" he said, and he screwed up his eyes at Philippa in an irritating way that suddenly made her feel young and foolish.

"Potato pie," said Mrs. Smith. "What they want is a man of their own to manage! Give 'em a man to twist and turn and look after, and you'd hear no more of these window-smashings and bombs!"

"Poor little Arthur, you can hear how he's bullied," Arthur whimpered.

"But a lot of them are married," Philippa objected.

"Your view is very interesting, Mrs. Smith," Brent said gravely.

"If they're married, they've managed their men too well!" declared Mrs. Smith. "They've trained 'em to be so perfect there's no more work for them to do. So they turn and start on some one else's man—look at Mr. Asquith now, a lot of 'em are trying to manage him—they want to

twist and alter him to their pattern. It's woman's nature! Some of 'em let the husbands go when the children come, they use up their managing on the children, but most of 'em keep a bit for the husband. It's woman's nature to want a man to manage, and she'll get him somehow, by hook or by crook!"

Arthur gave Brent a magnificent wink signifying that no woman on earth would ever dare to try to manage him! "You'll have a cup of tea, won't you, Mr. Brent?" Mrs. Smith added. "Arthur always has his cup of tea after his glass of beer. It's nice and strong now, and the cheese is close to your hand."

"And rather too close to your nose!" observed Arthur.

Brent declined the tea, but was persuaded to take a small piece of cheese.

Philippa was intensely interested: she looked round the little close room with its red and gold wallpaper, its heavy horse-hair seated chairs, its pink vases on the green painted mantel shelf; at the table with its coarse cloth, its artificial fern in a green-papered fernpot, and ugly china, and then she looked at Brent, sitting there at his ease. Yes, it was interesting.

Arthur pushed back his chair.

"Well, the drawing room's at your service, Mr. Brent," he said. "And Mrs. Smith will let such a favoured guest smoke a cigar in there, eh, Martha?"

"Certainly, Mr. Brent, and very welcome."

Michael Brent rose with a word of thanks.

"But you've nothing you want to say to me, have you?" Philippa said surprised.

"Er—if you don't mind——" he said, holding the door open for her.

Arthur coughed behind his hand, and winked at Martha.

Philippa went into the drawing-room; Brent followed and closed the door. She stood waiting.

"What a queer collection of ornaments," he said, walking

round the room. "Look at this gorgeous velvet boot beneath a glass shade. What's it meant for?"

"Ornament."

"Really? Isn't it queer?" He came and stood opposite her on the red and green hearthrug. "So this is where you live?" he said. "How long have you been here?"

"Since March."

"You've stood it all that time! Good Lord!"

"I like them," Philippa said primly.

"Of course," he assented gravely. She reddened a little.

"What did you want me for? Is it a message from Anne?"

"No. I gave you her note. Are you coming to the Lyric?"

"Yes."

"I've never seen so many ornaments in my life!" he ejaculated, staring at the marble-topped sideboard. "There's a ship!" He went to the sideboard and picked it up. "It's heavy—painted lead, I suppose. A very original rig. Have you seen a rig like that?"

"No: it's a little like a Penzance lugger, isn't it?"

He put the toy down and turned to her.

"You know the Penzance luggers, do you?"

"I was born in Cornwall."

"Lord, aren't they fine? I've just bought one—a pilchard boat she was—a little beauty, and I'm having her altered for sailing. You're fond of sailing?" he broke off looking keenly into her eager young face.

"I've never sailed in my life: I've always wanted to."

He nodded thoughtfully.

"Why don't you sit down?" he said.

She gave him a surprised glance. "I thought you were going," she said.

"You're not very hospitable, are you?"

"Why should I be? You can't want to stay here."

He seemed amused.

"Well, I'm going."

"You haven't told me what it was you wanted to speak to me about."

"Did I say there was anything?" he asked.

"Yes; or you inferred it."

"I hope I didn't lead you to expect anything interesting. I merely thought my good host and hostess would be hurt if I didn't make use of their drawing-room for a little while."

"Oh!" Philippa said.

There was a silence: his eyes roved round the excessively ornamental room again.

"They're clean anyway," he said as if to himself.

"Oh yes. Did you notice a money-box on the sideboard in the dining-room? Every one who makes a stain on the cloth has to put in a halfpenny fine."

"I'm glad you didn't tell me before I supped. Nervousness would have made me upset everything."

"The money goes towards buying new tablecloths or towels or anything of that sort."

"Splendid idea," he said. "So you're Cornish born," he added reflectively. "What part?"

"The south: a little place called Penrollick."

He nodded.

"And after that, you live here!"

"Yes. I've got to work, and they are very kind to me."

"Really?"

"I've had other work offered me to-day. Professor Elkington wants me to help him with his notes. I feel quite proud."

"Are you going to be his secretary?"

"Oh no, two hours every morning, if Mrs. Smith will let me go."

"Do you know him well?"

"The Professor? Oh yes, he was a friend of my father's."

He nodded again, and stood sunk in thought: then he roused himself.

"Well, good-night," he said.

"Have you decided what you're going to do about Lord Hardington's hundred pounds?" she asked impulsively.

"Er—yes," he replied coldly. "Good-night."

Philippa, left alone, sent a childish angry grimace after him.

"You've asked *me* enough questions! I hope you'll ask me some more to-morrow night, and then *I'll* snub *you,* Mr. Brent!"

She slipped from the room and went noiselessly up to her bedroom. She took off her frock thoughtfully, slipped into her dressing-jacket, and sat down by the window.

"Life's getting quite full and exciting," she thought, pulling out a hairpin, and laying it in her lap.

"I don't like him as much as Norman Ford," she thought, pulling out another. "Of course he's much older, he's quite old really, so I suppose he thinks I'm just a silly girl to be snubbed for asking a question!" she added several hairpins to the little heap in her lap, and her hair came rolling down in a loose black coil. She rested her elbows on the window sill and looked out over the house tops; her eyes went instinctively to the south where there was always a great glow in the sky, as if a building were on fire. A clock chimed, then struck eleven great booming notes.

"I don't think it's very nice of him to stay and take us all as a sort of show," she thought.

A woman screamed somewhere out in the night; Philippa drew back from the window with a shiver, her hands over her ears. She stood a minute, shrinking back against the table, then she picked up a brush and began to brush out her hair. Suddenly she paused, her hand arrested, then she moved swiftly to the bed, and stooping, peered beneath it. Isabella, in nightgown and curl papers lay there, crying. Philippa seized a bare leg and dragged her roughly out.

"It wasn't me! Gladys d-dared me! She s-said if I'd f-find out what you did, she'd g-give me——"

Philippa flung her from her with an exclamation of disgust.

"Go out of my room at once! And never *dare* to come in here again! Do you understand?"

But Isabella did not move: she stood and wept.

Philippa took her by her shoulder and dragged her to the door.

"Out you go! You're a nasty, mean, prying little creature, and I'll never have you in here again!"

She pushed her out into the passage, and closed and locked the door: then she went back to the table, and continued to brush her hair. Isabella's sniffs and sobbings went on irritatingly outside. Philippa called to her several times to go to bed at once, but the child did not move. At last she opened the door, and stood looking down on the sprawling figure.

"Why don't you go to bed?" she said sternly.

"I wont—n-never—till you m-make it up!"

"You want me to forgive you? What's the use of that, Isabella? It won't alter the fact that I think you're an ungrateful, sly little girl, will it?"

Isabella sat up shivering and wiped her eyes and nose with the sleeve of her nightgown.

"I won't never d-do it again," she whimpered.

"I don't trust you."

"I won't, s'elp me——"

"Hush, Isabella!"

"It's an awful thing to say. D'you believe me now?"

"Come in here."

Isabella followed her in.

"Sit on the bed and pull the blanket round you."

She sat there, her brimming red eyes fixed on Philippa.

"Now, why did you do it, Isabella?"

"Gladys said you had a young man, and sat up here writing letters to him and p'raps kissing his photograph, and she said if I'd find out she'd give me her pot of red janiums."

"And didn't it strike you how horrid it was?"

She shook her head.

"I wanted the pot of red janiums."

Philippa sighed.

"Gladys wanted to know his name, she said it wasn't the gentleman who came to see you to-night, because he was too old."

Philippa brushed her hair and sighed again. Isabella sat on the bed taking out her curl papers.

"Isabella, can't you understand that it is horrid to do things you ought not just to get something you want? Try to understand, Isabella, will you?"

"Yes."

She sat on the bed taking out her curl papers.

"Have you made it up now, Miss Hamilton?"

"Yes, child, I've made it up."

"I'm taking all my curlers off so's my hair'll be like yours, Miss Hamilton."

"Are you?"

"Would you like my hair better if it was straight, Miss Hamilton?"

"I'd like it done into a nice pigtail. Now you'd better go to bed, Isabella."

"Yes." She slipped to the floor and stood hesitating.

"Miss Hamilton, have—I mean I've won the red janiums, really, haven't I? So I may have them, mayn't I?"

Philippa suddenly seized her thin little shoulders and shook her.

"Oh, go to bed! I've done with you! Oh, Isabella, I shall never make you any better. There, good-night. You ought to have been asleep for hours. There's your mother's voice, she's coming to bed, they're very late, or you would have been caught and punished."

"I don't mind, s'long as I can have the red janiums."

She went across to the door.

"Why do you want the geraniums so badly?"

Isabella twisted the door handle round and round.

"I want them for you, I was going to put them in here on your table."

"Oh!" Philippa said.

She went across and kissed the child.

"That makes it better, Isabella. I wonder if you can see that it does. But I'd rather not have the red geraniums, dear, not got that way."

"I was 'fraid you'd say that," Isabella said mournfully.

"Were you? Then you're beginning to understand at last. Now run along, and thank you all the same. Good-night."

"Good-night, Miss Hamilton."

## CHAPTER XI

"A PENNY, Miss Hamilton?" Norman Ford said.

Philippa jumped, and before she laughed shut her mouth for a moment, very tight. Then she shook her head.

"They're not worth it."

"Halfpenny, then? I don't mind speculating to the extent of a halfpenny."

Anne said gently:

"Are you enjoying it, Philippa?"

"Oh, yes."

Michael Brent said that so far he considered the play over-rated: Anne argued, Norman Ford argued, and Philippa sat and communed with her ghosts. She did not know why that other evening—the evening of her father's death—should rise up so persistently to-night: she had been in a theatre twice since that Christmas Eve; this play was not in the least suggestive of that other wherein Bourchier had captured her fancy, but she found herself staring down into the stalls, her brain naggingly intent on picturing two people there—a girl in a white frock, and a young fellow with fair hair and honest blue eyes. . . .

She lowered her head and studied her programme, a nervous fear suddenly upon her that she might meet the gaze of those eyes from the stalls, a box opposite, anywhere.

"Why can't he stick to it?" it was Brent's voice—contemptuous. "A man who'd do a big thing like that would never funk the consequences."

"But it's his remorse," Anne said.

"Of course it's his remorse. That's what I quarrel with.

He wouldn't let any remorse worry him, if he'd done that. It's out of all nature."

Norman Ford struck in.

"You're not allowing for the poetic streak in the chap, Brent."

"Poetic streak be—hanged! A man's a man, if he's a man at all. Think a sin's worth doing—a big enough thing—and having done it, he wouldn't look back, as the chap in the play does. It's sentimental twaddle."

Anne laughed.

"You'd take all the subtleties out of human nature, Mike."

"A thing like that is apt to wash the subtleties away, Anne! Ever noticed the million little curls and lines a rippling outgoing tide leaves on the sand? Let the wind freshen a bit—one big wave comes in, goes out—you'll find all those intricate little patterns, all the tide marks, gone, and a clean wash of sand left. That's the sort of thing."

"You'd leave art very bare," Ford observed.

"Oh, if you're going to speak from a literary point of view!"

"Well, the play's a literary achievement, surely? Or meant to be."

"I thought it was meant to be a bit of human nature put up there for us to see."

"Hush!" Anne said. "I don't want to miss the opening of this act."

Philippa bent forward, the glamour upon her again, her ghosts forgotten. At the end of the scene she leant back with a long sigh.

"Only one more scene!" she said regretfully.

"Enjoying it?" Brent asked, bending over her chair.

She looked up at him and nodded: her eyes were brilliant, her face aglow. Anne smiled, pondering the way Philippa could change from plainness to a vivid, almost startling charm.

Brent looked down at her through half-closed lids: he was frowning as he often did when thinking.

"Like a box better than the stalls?" he said abruptly.

Philippa jumped nervously: her eyes questioned him, startled.

"She has never tried them," Anne said. "She has only been in box and dress circle. She had never been inside a theatre till she came with me, her father disapproved of them."

"By Jove, what a feast for you, Anne!" Ford exclaimed. "What did she do? Lord, to catch a grown-up girl in these days and take her to her first play!"

"As a matter of fact, it never struck me till now that it *was* her first play!" Anne confessed. "Philippa, you were very disappointing really. It's as well for you, and the artistic interest you take in the study of emotions, Norman, that everyone isn't as reserved and unemotional as Philippa."

Brent gave a low laugh: he took the chair between Anne and Philippa, and spoke to Ford.

"I suppose when you fall in love, old chap, half the pleasure will be in analysing your emotions?"

Philippa behind his broad back sat sick and silent: the others talked and laughed: in the middle of a discussion on the literary merit of a recent novel, she said abruptly: "I have been in the stalls. It wasn't my first play."

There was a little pause: Anne bent forward to look at her, round Brent. At the same moment Brent stooped to pick up his programme and the curtain went up, the lights went down; Brent observed:

"Anne, you always jump to rash conclusions. That accounts for the lack of proper emotion. If this chap does go back on himself and fling it all up, it's a rotten play!"

"It isn't," Ford said in a low voice. "It's a ripping study of a man's nature."

"A man's! A poof's!" Brent said contemptuously.

He looked round at Philippa.

"Am I in your way?"

"No."

In the dim light her face looked white, she was frowning heavily, her voice was curt. He thought, as Anne had thought, that he had never known a face change so much.

The man in the play did repent, he threw up all that he had won, and they left the box in a whirlwind of argument and discussion.

"Where shall we sup?" Ford interposed. "We can go on with it while we eat and drink."

They stood a moment waiting for a taxi.

"Savoy, eh?" Brent said.

"Yes, the Savoy," answered Anne.

"I want to go home, please," Philippa's voice, thin and childish, interposed.

They all looked at her.

"Don't you feel well, Philippa?" Anne said kindly.

"Quite well, thank you."

"I'll take her home, and join you," Brent said.

"No. I don't want you. I—I'm only tired," there were tears in her voice now. "I want to go home."

"Come with us, Miss Hamilton, a glass of wine is all you need," Ford said. "Here's a taxi. Come along."

He hustled Anne in.

"Do come, child," she said to Philippa.

"Get in, Ford. I'll join you presently," Brent said in a low voice.

Philippa found herself standing on the pavement looking after the taxi, then found herself getting into another, and Brent following her.

"I wish you wouldn't come," she said in a tired voice.

He took no notice.

"Awfully tired?" he asked presently.

"I—I suppose I am."

"Lean back. What will you have when you get to that place? To eat, I mean?"

"Nothing. I'm not hungry."

"What did you have before you started out? Potato tart?"

"It wasn't p-potato tart, it was potato pie!" she said with a little gurgle of laughter.

"Well, did you have that? Or what?"

"I had tea—oh, bread and butter and jam."

He said nothing.

And Philippa, appalled, stricken with horror, felt tears coming—coming—rolling down her cheeks!

"What are you crying for?" he said.

She did not attempt to deny the tears. In a little burst of woe her reason came:

"I've never in my life had supper at the Savoy!"

He laughed quietly.

"Let's go back!" he said.

"Oh! What? Oh, no! How could I?" She sat up excitedly. "I—I couldn't——"

He bent forward to the speaking tube.

"Savoy," he said to the chauffeur, and leant back again.

"I—please—I *really* would rather not!"

"Why?"

"I—would rather not. I'm so afraid they—they will——

"What?"

She was silent.

"Don't you want them to talk about your first play?" he said.

"Oh! Oh, how *could* you know——"

"I saw you were upset when you spoke of it."

"My father died that night, and—and—I——"

She stopped distressfully.

"Don't you worry," he said gently. "I'll see they don't talk about it."

"But how can you?"

"I will. Don't you believe me?"

"Yes."

"That's all right then. Now, what would you like to drink?"

She laughed excitedly.

"Oh, if you knew how I've longed to go out to supper after a play!"

"Haven't you ever done it?" he said quickly.

"No, never! Tell me what the Savoy is like. There is always music, isn't there?"

He did not reply.

"Isn't there?"

"I beg your pardon," he roused himself. "I'm afraid I didn't hear what you said."

"I don't mind. I shall see for myself in a minute."

"Here we are," he said.

## CHAPTER XII

"WHAT ho, Miss Pigtails, why don't you go to China? Wot's for dinner—wot's for dinner——"

It was Gladys and Isabella home from morning school. Gladys, still shrieking "Wot's for dinner," clattered into the kitchen; Isabella came into the workroom where Philippa sat.

"Isabella, I've done something awful," she said.

Isabella's sharp little eyes twinkled eagerly.

"What you done, Miss Hamilton?"

Philippa looked rather ashamed of herself. Isabella tweaked her red pigtail over her shoulder, and nibbled the end of it. "What you done? Not cheeked mother, have you?"

Philippa handed her a large white placard—one of the placards that always adorned the windows—on it she had printed in huge black letters: "French Hats for British Frights!"

"It's the last piece of cardboard," she whispered.

Isabella shrieked delightedly.

"You can use the other side—oh, no." She turned it over, and saw that the other side was stained and blotted. "Mother'll be pretty wild, won't she?" she said.

Philippa nodded.

"It's so silly," she sighed. "Your mother asked me to print 'French Hats for British Ladies,' and somehow I put that. They're all so hideous lately—the whole lot of them. I dream of their ugly faces under ridiculous hats at night!"

"Don't you mind, Miss Hamilton, I'll say I did it."

Philippa looked at her curiously.

"What would your punishment be?"

"Stay up in the bedroom this afternoon."

"Aren't you going to the Zoo with the others?"

Isabella tweaked her pigtail nervously.

"Oh, the Zoo isn't any great cakes!" she said carelessly.

"I believe you're rather fond of me, Isabella."

Isabella blinked rapidly and grew very red.

"It would be a fib anyway, and you mustn't tell fibs, you know, but you're rather sweet to have thought of it."

"I clean my teeth every morning now," she said shyly.

"Come here," Philippa said, "and give me a kiss."

Isabella gave her a loud kiss and giggled delightedly.

"Gladys says I'm a fool and don't know anything," she said excitedly. "But I do! I know lots. *I* know the doctor doesn't bring *babies.*"

"Oh, don't speak like that, child!"

"Why? I——" she burst into nervous tears. "I don't know much really—I thought you'd think more of me if I knew grown-up things! Why are you so cross with me? I thought it was clever to know, because they all look artful and won't tell me about it."

Philippa drew her on to her lap.

"I'm not cross, Isabella. I wonder if I can make you understand. Have you ever known anything very wonderful—so wonderful that you don't want to speak about it—No, that's rather above you——"

"Yes, I have," Isabella whispered unexpectedly.

"Have you? I wonder if you'd tell me."

"Yes, you."

Philippa did not understand.

"What did you say?"

"It's you."

"Me? What? Oh, child, *I'm* not wonderful——"

"Yes, you are, and I never will talk about you to Gladys or Janie Howard or anyone."

Philippa looked distressed; she stroked the queer little ugly red head.

"Well anyway, that's the reason you don't want to talk about—babies, Isabella. It's very wonderful, and some day you'll understand, and it will spoil it if you get poking and prying and laughing about it now."

The shop door-bell rang, and the next moment someone knocked on the intervening door.

"Come in!" Isabella cried shrilly. "I knew it was you, Mr. Brent. I'm sitting on Miss Hamilton's lap!"

"So I see. Busy?"

Philippa said yes, and hastily picked up the placard, but Isabella, giggling, exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Brent, you read what Miss Hamilton's wrote!"

Brent reached across the table, and took the cardboard from Philippa's hand. He read it aloud gravely:

"French Hats for British Frights."

He looked over it at Philippa's red face.

"It would make quite an original advertisement," he said.

"Quite," she agreed carelessly.

Mrs. Smith came bustling in, taking pins from her mouth, and sticking them into her bosom.

"Would you believe it, Miss Hamilton—oh, how-do-you-do, Mr. Brent, I'm afraid you won't find Mr. Smith in at this time!" Her tone lacked cordiality: she was thinking of the very scanty piece of cold beef for dinner and the half of a rice pudding over which the children would quarrel.

"I came to give Miss Hamilton a message. I mustn't stay a minute," Brent said.

Mrs. Smith sniffed: being a really hospitable woman it hurt her not to be able to press such an important guest to stay to dinner, and at once she became aggressive.

It was at this moment that Isabella attracted her attention by trying surreptitiously to get hold of the placard to hide it from her mother's eye.

"What's that you got there, Isabella?"

She snatched it from her and read it.

"You being funny, Miss Hamilton? This is the last bit of cardboard, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And nothing in the five shilling window! I'd never have thought it of you! At your age, too! If this is the sort of thing I've got to put up with——"

"If you will give me the size I'll go and get a fresh piece of cardboard," Brent's voice said suavely.

Mrs. Smith stared angrily at him, her red face redder than usual.

"Oh well——"

"The size?"

"I don't know——"

"It's a yard long and half a yard wide," Isabella put in. "I've measured them lots of times."

"Thank you," Brent said, and went out into the street.

There was silence in the little work-room: Philippa went on stitching a piece of silk.

"*I* think Miss Hamilton was awful funny to write that," quavered Isabella suddenly. All the children stood in wholesome awe of their mother's wrath.

"Oh, you do, do you, Miss Sharp? You get along into the dining-room, and sit there till dinner's ready."

Isabella sidled sadly from the room.

"What did you do it for, Miss Hamilton?" Mrs. Smith asked in ruffled tones.

Philippa sighed wearily.

"Just stupidity," she said.

Mrs. Smith grunted: neither spoke again till Brent came in with the cardboard.

"I hope that's right, Mrs. Smith. Miss Hamilton, Anne asked me to tell you she wants you this week-end at her Surrey Cottage. Will you come?"

Philippa's face brightened.

"Oh, yes! I should love to."

"She wants you to come on Friday evening."

Philippa looked at Mrs. Smith.

"Certainly, Mr. Brent," she said graciously. "A change'll do her good, she's looking pale lately. And I'm sure it was very kind of you to go and buy the cardboard, and troubling you too much, I'm afraid. I don't know what Mr. Smith would say, I'm sure!"

She was somewhat horrified now that she had let him go on an errand for the shop.

Brent turned to go.

"Then I shall see you on Friday," he said.

"Are you going, too?"

"Yes."

## CHAPTER XIII

ANNE shared the cottage with her aunt who was pretty and kind and old-fashioned and never in the least irritating. She had only lately made the arrangement, and this was the first time Philippa had been down. Brent had wired at the last moment, that he was detained in town. Anne had promptly wired to another man to take his place.

"Michael's wire means that he suddenly decided he'd sooner go down to Cornwall and see how his boat's getting on," she said to Philippa. "Three's a horrid number. Norman Ford is here; Aunt Eleanor doesn't count when there are men here, she has the old-fashioned idea of their love of good things to eat, and she spends all her time in the kitchen or over cookery books. I've wired to Harry St. Orme. You like him, don't you?"

"Oh, yes! I always feel terribly excited when I'm with him, he seems all sort of mixed up with theatres and things, and it's so lovely to be friends with anyone whose name you're always coming across in the papers."

Anne laughed.

"He's certainly a most promising young playwright," she said and paused, and snipped off a dead sweet pea. "He's spoilt—a little," she said slowly. "He's so good-looking and clever and has such charming manners, women spoil him."

"Anne," Philippa said, obviously not interested, "what a darling garden you have here."

"I love it," Anne said. "You know I'm rather a busy and sensible sort of woman all the week, and I let myself be as foolish as I like in the week-ends. I frolic and skip like a young lamb."

Philippa stretched her arms wide. "Oh, I could skip over the tree tops!" she cried. "Oh, it's good to be here, Anne, so good! I—I feel——"

"It's the dusk, my dear, and the scent of the sweet peas."

Philippa laughed uncertainly.

"You'll never let me tell you what I think of you, Anne!" she burst out. "Oh, if only the house would catch fire, and I could force my way into your smoke-filled room, and carry you out to safety!"

"I abominate even a smoking chimney."

"All you've done for me——"

"Now, child, take this bunch of sweet peas and don't be a goose. Bury your face in them. Isn't that pink a wonderful colour? It's Michael's favourite. I'm sorry he's not coming."

"So am I. He has been so kind to me, Anne."

"He enjoys his visits to your shop thoroughly."

"They adore him. Arthur copies his walk, and stuffs his handkerchief up his sleeve, instead of in his pocket now, and comes out with his opinions in the quaintest way. The other night they discussed his looks, with my leave! Mrs. Smith considers him good-looking. Arthur doesn't."

"No, he's not," Anne said.

"I like his face though, don't you?"

"Y-yes: I think he has a cruel mouth."

"But he's nice, isn't he?" Philippa had a childish faith in Anne's opinion.

"Anyway he *must* be nice, to be so fond of such a nice thing as sailing and the sea and boats!" she added.

Anne looked at her thoughtfully.

"What a baby you are, Philippa. Did you read in the papers a little while ago about that man—Field—who murdered his wife, and had murdered his first wife, too? Well, didn't you read what his great hobby was? Gardening; flowers. His house and garden were beautiful with them."

Philippa looked sad.

"But Mr. Brent's not murdered any wives, has he?"

Anne laughed.

"I'm not comparing Michael with that wretch. Don't make a general argument personal, my dear: it's a hopeless fault. There's Norman, let's go in."

Harry St. Orme arrived the next morning with the manuscript of a play in his coat pocket.

"It spoils the set of my coat," he said languidly to Philippa, whom he found in the garden. "And it will spoil my happiness down here."

"Why?"

"Who wants to write of a Society scandal here?"

"Well, don't."

"That's rather a brilliant idea."

Anne picking sweet peas joined in.

"Forget that you're the brilliant young playwright, and become a mere, rather foolish young man," she advised.

"In other words—be myself."

"Just so."

"Very well. Shall I dig?"

Philippa laughed.

"We're going blackberrying this afternoon. Miss Chambers is going to make blackberry jam. Isn't it glorious?"

"How young you are!" he sighed.

He looked at her appreciatively: this joyous young Philippa was new to him.

"I hate blackberrying," he said. "But I'll come and carry your basket."

"Oh, no, you won't. You'll come and pick, and pick, and pick!" she declared.

"Very well; even that," he said softly.

"Will you really? Then we'll pick against Anne and Mr. Ford. Oh, I wish it was time to start now."

"I think I do, too."

She laughed delightedly.

"And a minute ago you didn't want to blackberry at all! Isn't it funny how exciting it is? Because one always gets horridly scratched and stained, and I can't bear blackberry jam——"

"Neither can I."

"Then ours must be genuine altruistic blackberrying, mustn't it?"

"Mine isn't."

"Anne, what time are we going to start blackberrying?" she called through the hedge of sweet peas.

"As soon after lunch as you like."

"Oh, we can start at two then, can't we?"

"At what prehistoric hour do we lunch then?" St. Orme asked.

"A quarter past one."

His fine eyes gazed at her reproachfully. "I could never do justice to the blackberrying idyll in a horrible hurry like that," he said.

"You don't want more than three quarters of an hour for *lunch,* do you? Why, I can finish mine easily in ten minutes!"

He smiled.

"Very well. I want to start as soon as possible, too."

"Anne, where are you? How do you spell antecedent? Is it 'dant' or 'dent'?" called Ford's voice from a window.

"Dent," replied Anne. "What are you doing?"

"Finishing that essay on idleness."

"Come out and practice what you preach."

"All right."

He emerged presently.

"What are you two plotting?" he said to Philippa.

"To beat you and Anne over a blackberry match this afternoon."

"Good."

"I think it would be fairer to change partners half time really," she said, looking disparagingly at St. Orme.

Ford looked at him too, and his little kindly eyes twinkled.

"Don't you think he'll do much?"

Philippa laughed and shook her head.

But whether he did much, or not, they won by a pound and nearly a quarter. He confessed honestly enough that the victory was chiefly due to Philippa's tremendous energy.

"Energy!" she cried. "I—I could do a ten-mile walk now!"

"Come then," he said, putting down his tea-cup.

"Shall we? Let me eat one more chocolate cake first."

He passed the plate to her.

"Dinner at half past seven," Anne said when Philippa rose, and picked up her hat. It was a big floppy straw that framed her face most becomingly.

"Where shall we go?" she said, when they stood out in the wood. "There's a ruined old castle——"

"Nowhere," he said reproachfully. "Don't you think it spoils the charm of a walk to have a particular goal? One has to think of the goal, and I like to let my thoughts wander where they list."

"All right, come along."

She started off at an easy swinging pace.

"Are you going to keep this up for ten miles?" he asked.

"You don't want to dawdle, do you? I hate dawdling!"

"Sometimes I love it," he said softly.

"I never do, unless it's frightfully hot," she said prosaically. "I feel like walking this evening." She stopped in the road and faced him. "Why do you come?" she asked.

For once he was at a loss: he met her clear gaze, and suddenly he laughed.

"I feel like walking, too," he said simply.

She swung back.

"Oh, that's all right. I thought you didn't."

"Don't you ever stop to look at things?" he asked meekly.

"Rather! Everything. There, those little pink pigs, aren't they adorable?"

She leant over a gate, absorbed.

"I didn't mean pigs exactly."

"Didn't you? Come on!"

He took his arms from the gate, and went after her.

Philippa lifted her face to the skies.

"What lovely grey clouds! Oh, what an evening! Everything smells so glorious."

He stopped and pointed out a distant wood.

"Beautiful," she agreed. "Everything is getting that wonderful purplish colour now that I love."

"Aren't those cows jolly picturesque?" he said, settling his shoulders comfortably against the trunk of an elm.

She nodded.

"Come on!"

They went on.

"One can't talk much at this pace; that's the worst of it," he said.

She looked at him surprised.

"Do you want to talk?"

"Yes."

She stopped.

"I'm sorry. What do you want to say?"

He looked at her, and was silent. Philippa happy was exceedingly attractive, and this evening he found her tantalizing: he could not understand her, she was so natural and unaffected that he thought it must be a pose.

"What was it?" she urged.

"Nothing in particular; I can't talk with you balanced on one foot ready to be off!" he said irritatedly.

She looked at him earnestly.

"Do you mean just *talk?*" she exclaimed. "Oh, I never want to talk on an evening like this."

"Don't you?"

They went on in silence awhile.

"Are you cross?" she asked presently. "You sounded huffy rather."

"Not at all."

"Oh, now I know you are! Now you're icily dignified!"

"Indeed?"

She stopped by another gate and watched some hens pecking round a haystack.

"Yes; I'm sorry. I don't mind your talking a bit so long as you don't expect me to."

"And I suppose you wouldn't listen either?"

"Yes, I should. I always listen to you, you're so interesting when you talk about plays and actors and actresses."

"Suppose I talk about turnips?"

"Well, I daresay you'd make them interesting, too."

He smiled.

"As a matter of fact, I wanted to talk about *you,*" he said.

"Me? Oh, you'd never make me interesting!"

"You don't need making; you're most distractingly interesting already."

She turned her head and looked at him.

"Not really? You're only being polite, aren't you?"

"Most certainly not."

She smiled radiantly.

"How awfully nice! I always thought I was rather dull!"

"Dull! That's the last adjective I should apply to you."

"Is it? It's one I particularly hate. Come on!"

He frowned angrily.

"I was wondering about your life," he said.

"I'm not going to talk about my life this evening; it's

not a bit thrilling, and I'm absolutely happy at this moment."

"Are you? So am I."

"Isn't Anne an angel?" she burst out suddenly.

"Rather. I'm very grateful to Anne."

His tone was significant.

"Mind that horrid black slug," said Philippa. "So am I."

He studied as much of her profile as he could see beneath her hat; as it was only the tip of her nose and the line of cheek and chin he could not gather much.

"I don't know where we are. I think we'd better strike for home, don't you?" she said, pausing.

"I'm afraid so."

"Let's sit by that haystack a little while. Look, there's a patch of sunshine still. I want to sit in that."

She sat down leaning back against the stack, and her eyes wandered over the beautiful country glowing now in a wonderful pink light. She sat quite still, welcoming all the peaceful old sounds of the country at eventide.

St. Orme stood close by, his arms resting on a gate, looking at her; he did not speak.

She broke the silence softly at last.

"When the pink light goes off that stubble field, we will go."

In another minute or two she rose; she looked at him gravely.

"Wasn't it beautiful?"

"Yes," he said simply.

"You didn't want to talk then," she said in a tone of satisfaction.

"No; not with you."

"How—with me?"

"With some people I should have talked, to keep all that," he waved his hand, "out. I couldn't have borne all that beauty in most people's company."

"Neither could I," she said shyly.

"You didn't find me unsympathetic?"

"No."

She did not realize that it was because he had had no part in it, that she had forgotten his existence: she thought she had found him sympathetic.

"I'm glad," he said gently.

She was silent.

"Are you tired?" he asked presently. "You mustn't tire yourself."

Philippa's heart beat a little quicker; she loved being liked, and his tone was very kind and earnest.

"I want you to let me read the first act of my new play some time, may I?"

She turned shining eyes on him.

"Oh, how lovely!"

"I want your opinion," he said gravely.

She thrilled with delight.

"Oh—you can't——"

"But I can. I do. When will you give me an hour?"

"When you like."

"I want no one else."

"Not even *Anne?*"

"Not even Anne. I don't suppose we can manage it to-night: to-morrow some time."

"I don't know anything about plays——"

"You have a very original way of looking at things. I consider your opinion decidedly worth having."

His tone was certainly somewhat pompous, but Philippa, excited, delighted, did not notice it. He began to talk about his work: insensibly their steps slackened. They reached the cottage at a quarter past seven.

Philippa, flying upstairs to dress, called through Anne's door.

"I won't be a *minute!*"

"What made you so late?" Anne appeared in the doorway.

"It was Mr. St. Orme's fault. Oh Anne, he has been *so* interesting! I quite forgot to hurry!"

St. Orme, going into his own room, had paused just within the door.

"Queer girl!" he muttered, and went whistling to the table.

## CHAPTER XIV

PHILIPPA sat in the train, her eyes fixed on the station entrance: when at last the train began to move she leant back with a sigh of relief, and closed her eyes. She looked pale and tired and very cross. It was not yet nine o'clock: they would be sitting down to breakfast at the Cottage now; Anne had had her note. Would Anne think it strange? Would she guess that she had run away? Run away from Harry St. Orme? A wave of red came into her pale face; she frowned heavily. She was a fool, yet—she drew a long breath—she was glad she had run away. Yes, she was glad. If she hadn't run away she would be sitting opposite him now, and he would be handing her things, and being awfully nice to her, and then he would have travelled up to town with her. He had said he would. Philippa was frightened, badly frightened. She had risen early, scribbled a note for Anne telling her that she had decided she ought to go by the early train, in case Professor Elkington had any special notes he wanted her to copy, and had walked to the station. A maid had brought her a cup of tea and some bread and butter. And now she was safe for a while. But suppose Harry St. Orme went on being nice to her? Suppose he made love to her again? Would she fall in love with him? Would she? She covered her eyes with her hands, and tried to think clearly. She did not want to fall in love with him, or with anyone else. Yet —when he had told her last night out in the garden that her dear graciousness—that was what he had called it—had made him feel he would strive to write higher things—hadn't it been rather nice? And when he read his play, and listened so earnestly to her opinion—*hers!*—hadn't it been delight-

ful? And—and when he held her hand when he said good-night, and whispered that it had been a day of days—had she minded really very much? Hadn't she felt rather excited and pleased? Till she got into bed, and couldn't sleep, and began to think. Then she had grown scared, because—surely—all this meant—must mean—that if he grew to care for her, she might grow to care too? Mustn't it mean that? Because, otherwise, she would have shrunk from him when he held her hand. They always did in books, nice girls, and she wasn't a horrid girl, was she? Was she? That night—that Christmas Eve. . . .

No, she wasn't a horrid girl, somehow she was sure she wasn't. Then it meant that if he went on making love to her she would not be able to help falling in love! Yet she did not like him very much really: he was quite conceited and fearfully particular about what he ate, and he shivered at the thought of a cold bath, and always had warm ones. And his hands were too white and soft. She thought all that. But he had such a nice voice, and such beautiful eyes, and when he looked at you as if he thought you were too wonderful for words, it *was* rather nice. Because he was so clever and interesting, and everyone thought the world of him.

The train ran into Victoria Station, and stopped: Philippa rose, and suddenly the old childish prayer sprang to her mind:

"God, don't let me fall in love!"

And with her weariness came the old distaste for her life. She looked defiantly at the porter who took her suitcase, and haughtily demanded a hansom. She knew quite well that she ought to have taken the tube to Professor Elkington's house, but she told herself passionately that she was sick of her sordid poverty!

She found the Professor in a difficult mood: his housekeeper had left him on the Saturday without a word of warning; the cook had been impertinent to him, and the parlourmaid had spilled gravy over his shoulder.

Philippa, stubbing the blotting-paper with her pen, listened unsympathetically to his tale of woe.

"What do you want me to copy out?" she asked, when he paused. He lifted his hands in a gesture of despair.

"I have nothing! I did no work at all on Saturday, my child. The brain is always a delicate piece of mechanism, it is acted and re-acted upon in the most subtle and unexpected way. I do not care for food, I take no pleasure in my meals, but I have a fastidious palate, a palate so delicate that it turns in loathing from unsavoury or ill-prepared or badly-served food——"

"Lots of people are like that," Philippa put in.

He waved it aside.

"From unworthy motives connected with appetite," he said reproachfully. "That is indeed a common and somewhat coarse failing. But for me! Ah, the curse of the overdeveloped organisation! The brain of a man of letters is a thing of wonder. A stray wind of uncongeniality, in any form whatsoever, and it is upset. It can do no work worthy of it——"

Philippa was used to his long monologues, and had become an adept at not listening, and yet catching on at significant pauses. He went on for some time now, but at last wound up with the remark that Philippa never upset his brain, but was a continual source of inspiration to his work.

She smiled grimly at that.

"I seem a sort of universal inspirer!" she muttered.

"You do indeed inspire me. How I wish you could be my housekeeper, my child. Would you undertake the work? For a fitting remuneration?"

She stopped drawing circles on the blotting-paper.

"What should I have to do?"

"Merely order my meals, and grace my table," he answered gallantly.

"How about the notes?"

"Oh—er—I should not expect you to undertake that also——"

"You mean you only took me on out of charity?"

"My dear child! Your crudeness pains me!"

"Why? I think it was very kind of you."

He beamed upon her.

"As the daughter of my dear old friend——"

"I expect you'd much sooner have your notes typed really, wouldn't you, Professor?"

"Well, to be honest, it is more convenient: the publishers prefer it, and the typists are, of course, so accustomed to the work that they really get through it at an almost incredible rate."

She nodded.

"It seems to me that to be your housekeeper would be a very easy job," she said. "Why, I should have nearly all the day free."

"Yes; and I would give you a hundred and fifty pounds a year."

Philippa gasped.

"Oh, Professor, how lovely! You're not saying it out of charity again, are you?"

"Most certainly not, my child. I should indeed consider myself fortunate with you as my housekeeper. I have never known so peaceful a period, since the marriage of my good Mrs. Thinger, as those few days before the advent of my last housekeeper when you took pity upon my helplessness——"

"Oh, I only concocted a menu or two," she broke in. "I like your cook, she is always so anxious to do what I suggest."

"There you have it, my child! It is your blessed privilege to exact affection and obedience from those beneath you! Therefore you would make an ideal housekeeper. I wish indeed it could be so arranged."

"Why not? You can give me warning, if I'm not satisfactory."

He shook his head.

"A mere daily visit, as an established rule, would not be

desirable. Servants are a peculiarly conscienceless race: they require constant supervision or the possibility of such supervision, which can only be achieved by the presence of the housekeeper in the house. Moreover, there are little duties——"

"But I meant to live here! You don't think I expected all that money for just coming in, and writing a menu!"

"My dear Philippa, it would be an impossible position. You are young and impulsive, but it is my duty to think very carefully of your welfare, and it would not be for your welfare to live in my house as my housekeeper. There are always the social convenances to be considered, my child."

She stared at him incredulously.

"You mean that people would say things?" she blurted out.

"The world is censorious, and I, for one, always uphold social convention."

"But—why, it is absurd, Professor! Why, you could adopt me if you liked!"

"There is no question of my adopting you," he said stiffly. "I do not wish to discuss the question further."

"I may as well go then, since you've no notes for me to copy. And I needn't come again, need I? Typists are always easy to procure."

He was very courteous and regretful, but Philippa left the house with nothing before her but her work in Prince's Road, and that brought her nothing but food and a bed. The Professor's weekly payment had meant a good deal to her, more than the value of the money. She went back to Chelsea in a state of rebellion, and found there a telegram from Anne:

"Sorry you had to go early shall not see you for long while going naples to-night about branch of society for prevention cruelty animals.—ANNE."

Gladys and Ferdinand were in bed with measles, the house rang with their peevish and riotous voices. Mary had given notice, and was sulking; the baby never stopped crying, and Mrs. Smith, overworked, was short-tempered. To Philippa it was suddenly so sordid as to be unbearable. At dinner the tablecloth was dirty. Mrs. Smith's sharp eyes saw her arranging plate and salt-cellar over stains.

"I suppose a dirty cloth makes you feel sick, Miss Hamilton! I don't like it, myself, but Mary won't do the washing to-day. I'd advise you to try and not be so squeamish, if you've got your living to get! You can't work on an empty stomach, and the mutton don't taste any different for the stains on the cloth!"

"I'm not hungry."

Mrs. Smith sniffed.

"The country don't seem to have done you much good. There's the bell, p'r'aps as you don't want any dinner, you'll attend, Miss Hamilton. And please remember to throw in a bit of French. You forget it lately."

Isabella, subdued, ventured:

"May I go and see what she wants, mother?"

"No, miss, you stay where you are, and sit up! I never saw such manners in my life! Sitting hunched up over your plate——"

Philippa went into the shop. After showing the elaborately dressed little sharp woman there all the hats in the shop, she stood and waited for the customer to make up her mind. She looked at her with distaste: she was very aggressive, and she smelt of cheap scent, and her curled and crimped little head beneath the over-trimmed hats was not in the least funny, only ugly.

"Where's madam?" the customer suddenly demanded.

"Having her dinner."

"Oh! I think I'll call again then."

She picked up her black toque, stuck a hatpin apparently through her head, and went out.

Philippa put the hats back in their places.

The sight of a head passing the window outside roused her for a moment: it was like St. Orme's, and she turned to flee, terror-stricken.

"Sooner this than that," she thought.

And that night she had very bad dreams: she dreamt that her mother came and stood beside the bed, and besought her to be careful. "Do not love a man, child! Never give your love to any man. Love in our family is a curse!"

And again, she dreamt that a man—she never saw his face—was slowly strangling her, and she heard her mother's voice: "You gave him your love, and he will crush the life out of you!"

## CHAPTER XV

PHILIPPA, dusting boxes the next afternoon, looked up as the shop door-bell tinkled: Brent came in. She smiled relieved: "Oh, I'm so glad you're not a customer."

"Well, how did the Surrey visit go?"

"It was very nice."

"That all? And I thought the cottage was such a success."

"So it is! You always——"

"Always what?"

"Think silly things."

"Did you wonder what kept me away?"

"No; Anne told me."

"Oh. What did she tell you?"

"That you had probably decided you'd sooner go down to Cornwall to your boat."

"So that's what she told you."

Philippa dusted a box.

"I'm going to be married soon," she said.

"What?"

"I'm going to be married."

"That's good. Who is he?"

"Professor Elkington."

*"What?"*

And suddenly she began to laugh; she leant against the shelves of boxes, and laughed and laughed.

"It d-does s-seem funny, doesn't it?" she said at last, wiping her eyes.

"Can't we go somewhere, and you'll tell me all about it?"

"I daren't ask Mrs. Smith, everyone's got measles or

grumps or given warning or something. I'd like to tell you. Oh!" a wild note crept into her voice, "I'd *like* to tell you!"

"I'll manage it. Is she in the workroom?"

"Yes, trimming a ghastly hat."

He went to the intervening door, knocked, and disappeared. He came back presently, followed by a smiling Mrs. Smith.

"The drawing-room is quite at your service, Miss Hamilton, if you like to entertain Mr. Brent for a bit. I can manage the shop."

Philippa thanked her, and they walked upstairs into the stuffy little drawing-room.

"It certainly was a ghastly hat," he said. "Now tell me."

He sat opposite her, leaning forward, his hands between his knees, looking down at the red and green rug

Philippa began.

"I had a letter from the Professor this morning. He can't get a suitable housekeeper, and he thinks I'd do. But he thinks people would talk if I lived there. So he wrote and asked me if I'd marry him."

She paused: he said nothing.

"He offered me lots of inducements; plenty of freedom and money, weeks and months in the country, plays and things. I—I decided that it was just what I wanted, provided I should be *only* a housekeeper. I thought he couldn't want to—to kiss me, or any rubbish like that, at his age, but I went along this morning, to make sure."

"I see. You went and asked him if he'd want to kiss you? What did he say?"

"I put it as delicately as I could, but I think he was terribly shocked at the mere idea! I'm to be his housekeeper, and in return spend some of his money and enjoy myself, and—I shall be married!"

"You want to be married?"

"Yes."

"As badly as that?"

"Yes."

There was a silence; he looked up at her, she met his cold blue eyes steadily.

"Have you really thought at all, Philippa?"

"Yes."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not a fool. I know what you mean. You mean that I may fall in love some day, and—and I shall be married. But I shan't fall in love. I'm not that sort. I know myself. That's what I'm doing it for."

"I wish you could tell me more," he said gently.

Her eyes filled with tears; her bad night had unnerved her.

"I—I'd like to," she said with unusual humility, "if it won't bore you."

"Aren't we good enough friends to do away with that sort of remark?"

"I think so."

She sat staring out over the pot of artificial hyacinths on the little table in the window. He did not speak: every now and then his eyes beneath frowning brows studied her face.

"For one thing," she began, "I—feel I can't go on with this. I can't. It's sordid. I'm sick of being poor. I want to be able to spend money; to buy lovely things, to go about in hansoms and taxis and my own brougham!"

"Yes?" he said; his tone brushed all that aside ruthlessly. "Yes?" he said.

She gave him a quick, rather scared little look.

"I don't want ever to—to care for a man."

"Why?"

"I don't."

He waited.

"And if I'm married, I never shall."

"You can't be so blind as that! You must know you're talking rubbish!" he said roughly.

"No; I'm not. Of course I know that married people do do it. I'm not a fool. I know that marriage wouldn't stop it if I were that sort. But I'm not."

"Oh! What sort?"

"The sort who—who don't—the *ordinary* sort who care, if they do care—I mean who haven't a—determination *not* to care."

He said nothing; but his raised eyebrows accused her of unutterable foolishness.

She went on breathlessly:

"You don't understand. I've found out—I know I should never care for a man unless he made love to me, and if I were married no one would. Don't you see?"

"What caused you to make such a discovery?"

She twisted her hands in her lap.

"I—I love people to like me," she said in a low voice. "There have been so—few, and I—I thought I was rather dull and uninteresting, and when he made out I was so—so nice, I liked it, but I don't really like him, only it means that I might—and——" she lifted her head and looked at him. "My mother's last words were a prayer that I should never know the curse of love," she said.

He was silent.

Philippa's lips were trembling; she straightened the family album on the table, and looked across at him in his tight little upholstered chair.

"Is that all?" he said.

"I think so. Oh, you don't know what a refuge it seems! And I shall do my share. I shall make him very comfortable."

"You've accepted his proposal?"

"Yes."

"Have you known the Professor long?"

"Oh yes, he was a friend of my father's."

She added:

"I didn't accept this morning. I told him I would think it over. He asked me if I were going to consult Anne, but I said that unfortunately she was abroad. I wrote to him after lunch."

"Has the letter gone?"

"I think so. I put it on the kitchen table for Mary to post when she went out."

He rose and went to the door.

"Where are you going?"

"To fetch that letter, if it's there."

"But why? And it's in the kitchen. Please don't be absurd——"

"Will you fetch it?"

"No."

He left the room.

Philippa rose, and stood staring at the door. He returned presently with the letter.

"What did they say?" she exclaimed.

"There was no one there except a fat baby with a crust in its mouth."

"What are you going to do now?"

He tore the letter across.

"That," he said.

Anger flamed in her face.

"You're impertinent! What right have you to interfere?"

"Don't be melodramatic, Philippa."

"I've never told you you might call me Philippa."

"Haven't you? Well, now sit down again."

"I won't. You had no right to tear that letter up, but I can easily write another."

"Most easily, only first you've got to think a bit more."

"You can't make me," she said childishly.

"Philippa, will you tell that old fool that he will have to wait for his answer till you have seen Anne?"

"No: I don't want to ask Anne about it."

"Because you know she'd never let you do it, if she could prevent you."

"Yes," she said calmly.

"That shows you know you're in the wrong. You're afraid of Anne."

"I'm not. Our points of view are different. She wouldn't understand."

"You stand there—an ignorant foolish girl—and think you know better than *Anne?* Anne Forsythe!"

"Yes."

"The conceit!" he muttered angrily.

"You're an idiot!" Philippa burst out rudely.

"I shouldn't like to say what you are!" he retorted.

Then he turned to her.

"I'm sorry. Let's sit down again."

They sat down again in the two little pink and green upholstered chairs.

"What's the good?" she said.

"You're determined to re-write that letter?"

"Yes."

"Will you promise to leave even one day before you answer it?"

"No."

"Why won't you do even that?"

"Because I want to have it settled. Because once I've agreed, *nothing* could make me change. I'm not that sort."

"No: you've plenty of the obstinacy that the possessor always calls loyalty," he said drily.

"I don't care what you call it. I've got it. I want to write and feel that it is settled. I shall marry him at once."

"It proves that you are not sure of yourself. You're afraid that you might change your mind. You have to be bolstered up with your given word!"

"I shouldn't change, but I want the restful feeling that it is definitely settled."

"You're a coward, Philippa, that's what it is."

"Am I? Perhaps so."

There was a silence: a man went by in the street selling bananas: his hoarse unintelligible shout roused Brent from a brown study.

"You told me that since you'd known Anne your life had been wonderfully different. Can't you wait a bit?"

"You don't understand. You never would, unless," her voice sank, "you'd known my mother. Yes, I *am* a coward; you're quite right. Let's leave it at that."

"I can't. You've got to listen a minute. I'm a good bit older than you, and there's no one else to tell you. This —er—love you're so afraid of—it comes—just comes whether you want it or not. I know——"

She looked at him with a new interest.

"Was it—horrid?" she whispered.

"Pretty bad. If it comes to you after you're married, it will mean tragedy. If it came to you before you were married it might mean——"

"Worse tragedy," she said wearily.

He was silent.

"There's another thing," he said frowning down at his boots. "This—er—fool of a Professor is a man, you know, and—er—you haven't much experience of men. I've heard one or two things—er——"

"You mean about his temper? I know. I heard him fly into a rage one day; he didn't know I was there. I don't mind. I think it's worth it." She looked at him straightly. "I don't want to talk about it any more. I have absolutely decided that I will marry the Professor."

She rose.

"That's all," she said.

He rose too.

"Philippa, would I do as well?"

She looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"You? What for?"

"Will you be my housekeeper, instead of the Professor's? Marry me, instead of him, under the same conditions?"

The startled colour leapt to her face.

"Are you joking? I don't feel the least inclined to be funny——"

"Neither do I. Engaging a housekeeper is much too serious a business."

"You *mean* it? But you're different—it——"

"I hope so. But if you will think it over calmly, you will see that the differences are all in my favour, except the money. I'm not at all a rich man. The occasional heavy books I publish on architecture and shipping and such dry subjects add very little to my income. I couldn't give you such a high salary as the Professor. Otherwise—won't you sit down again first?"

"I'm sick of sitting."

"Very well. Now——"

"No! It's very—kind of you, but I won't desert the poor old Professor," she broke in. "Anyway, you're either being funny, or have got some idea of being kind or something."

"You give me much higher motives than my real ones, I'm afraid. You know that I've a house in Norfolk, and that my sister lived with me and looked after the place, till last year, when she was selfish enough to get married?"

She nodded.

"Since then I've lived there very little. I found it impossible. We live ten miles from anything approaching a town, and tradesmen are, of course, practically unknown. I'm not well enough off to provide my own meat in the shape of cattle and so on. Eggs are all I do in that line. The consequence was that after my sister's departure, I was starved or overfed. One day the house would be overflowing with meat, the next the groom would not be able to clean the harness because he spent his day burying meat that

proclaimed its badness in a most nauseating way. The hens ceased to lay, the servants quarrelled, and came to *me* to settle their disputes. Is it clear to you now that I really require a housekeeper badly?"

"Y-yes perhaps, but not me."

"Pardon, but if Professor Elkington, a noted old gourmand and celebrated fusser, considered you suitable for the post, I should consider myself very lucky to get you."

She looked at him uncertainly, her eyes distressed.

"Philippa," he said kindly. "You'd like it much better with me. I'm not so old or fusty as the Professor, and I wouldn't be half so down on you if you ordered rice pudding two days running."

She laughed.

"But anyway—even if you're serious—it would be so mean to the Professor."

"Would it?" he said. "I don't think that need worry you."

"But—but—it's different somehow—and——"

"I'll give you a day to think it over, shall I?"

"No, thank you. I—I'd rather not—it's very kind of you, but I'd rather not."

"You don't mean to tell me you like the Professor better than you like me?"

"It's quite different."

"I hope so. Of course mine would be the harder job. That's true. There'd be more work——"

"You know I don't mind that. I want it."

"Well, it's not a modern convenient house, and as I told you the housekeeping must be very difficult; you would have to look so far ahead. On the other hand I could give you some sailing——"

"I want to think a minute," she interrupted.

"That's what I want you to do."

"Don't you see that *you* might do what you feared for me? Why shouldn't *you* care for someone?"

"It's different with me," he said. "I shall never do that again. I've done it once."

She looked at him gravely.

"No; you needn't be afraid. I don't mope," he assured her.

Suddenly she began to laugh.

"I believe it would be rather fun," she cried. "It's only you I'm doubtful about. *I'd* much sooner housekeep for you than for the Professor really, I think!"

"That's settled then."

"I'm rather afraid of you," she said doubtfully. "Will you be very hard to please?"

"I don't think so, as long as you're quiet, and don't give me eggs and bacon for breakfast every morning."

"I've a horrid temper."

"I know."

"And sometimes I'd look a very ugly sort of housekeeper."

"I know that too."

"If we found it didn't answer, we'd agree to separate, wouldn't we?" she asked earnestly.

"Of course: one of us would give the other warning."

"There's one other thing. I—I was worrying about it before——"

"What's that?"

"We shouldn't have to go to church and tell *lies,* should we? I couldn't do that."

"I'll manage that all right."

"And the poor old Professor will have to find another housekeeper! Well, I never should have suited him; I'm sure I should have worried him into an early grave!"

"How about me?"

She gave him a brilliant smile.

"Oh, you're stronger and more able to take care of yourself." She came across to him and held out her

hand. "We'll still be good friends, won't we?" she said.

He shook hands heartily.

"I hope so, I'm sure. Now run and put your hat on. We're going to get tea somewhere."

# PART II

## CHAPTER I

PHILIPPA woke with a jump, and sat up in bed.

"Wake up! Past five! We must make a start before seven, or she'll be aground," called Michael's voice through the door.

"I'll be ready by half-past five! What sort of a morning is it?"

"Mist hanging about, and heavy clouds low on the horizon, but there's a nice little breeze from the south'ard. It'll clear in a little while, I think. Don't dawdle. I'd like to leave here not later than a quarter to six."

"All right."

She jumped out of bed singing softly to herself.

At twenty minutes to six she ran down the wide old stairs and joined Brent in the outer hall.

"These all we're to take?" he asked.

"Big basket and little one—yes, that's all. Oh Michael, it's going to be a lovely morning!"

"Take some biscuits to eat as you go along, Philippa."

"I'll get some."

She ran through the little oak panelled sitting-hall, into the dining-room. Brent strolled down the wet drive, with the great elms on either side dripping stealthily on to the leaves beneath.

"I've filled my pockets," she said hurrying after him.

When she reached his side she turned and looked back at the house. It was a square grey stone house, standing almost in a little wood, so thickly the trees grew around it. A hundred years or so before, a certain John Thomas Hos-

king had had a wing built on to the south end, that jutted out at right angles to the house, and was shut off within by a great oak door: this wing was reported to be haunted. The story ran that this John Thomas Hosking inherited the place only on condition that he allowed his younger brother William to live in it with him. This brother was half-witted, and much hated by John who, therefore, keeping to the letter of the will, had the wing built on, and there William lived with an attendant till he died. There were those who said that poor, lonely, half-witted William haunted the empty rooms to this day, crying out for the father who had died and left him alone in the world.

The George Hosking who owned the place now did not live there, but let it furnished, and was in the habit of closing the south wing, in fear, so people said, of William's appearing, and perhaps frightening the tenant to death.

Philippa shivered and turned away.

"Frightened of that closed wing, Philippa?"

"No: but it looks so—so sad in this early morning light."

"It's the grey stone."

"Now—have I forgotten anything? I don't think I have. Isn't it cold?"

"You'll soon be warm, walking at this pace. You've got your sweater on under that coat? That's right."

They crossed a flat stone stile and hurried on over the wet meadows.

"It's a heavy mist, but it's clearing. You've got shoes in the locker, haven't you?"

"Yes, and my rubbers."

The sea came into view, a grey quiet sea with a mist hanging over it.

"I wish the sun would break through," Brent said.

"Oh, it will soon. I don't mind. It's lovely anyway! I want to shout and sing and dance," Philippa cried.

"Well do."

"I'm afraid we might miss the tide if I waited to do all that."

"She was afloat last night at six. So we can make a start any time up to seven, the tides are making now."

They went on in silence till they reached the top of the last hill. They stood a minute looking down at Tregarra, at its huddled grey stone cottages and little harbour with the great herring drivers and pilchard boats looming through a mist.

"It isn't so picturesque without the blue smoke from the chimneys," she said.

"Which is the *Magic's* mast, Philippa? You can only see her mast from here."

She hesitated, then picked it out diffidently.

"That's right. Come along."

They swung down the hill, the air getting very wet and cold, but as they pushed the dinghey down the slip the clouds began to lift, and as Philippa climbed from the dinghey on to the *Magic's* wet decks, the sun burst through the mist in a pale shimmer.

Philippa opened the companion and put the baskets down in the cabin; then she hurried on deck and began to struggle to undo the wet tyers on the mainsail. Brent was busy unbolting the legs.

"Pretty well crowded this morning," he said.

She nodded. To her it always seemed an impossible thing to get out of the harbour from where the *Magic* lay; between her and the entrance the mackerel drivers, solid and gigantic, were moored in tiers.

The buoy thrown over and the moorings slipped, Philippa went to the tiller, repeating to herself: "Port—left. Starboard—right" and watching anxiously for Brent's guiding gesture. She watched him shoving, with his shoulder against the bow of a lugger, till a lane of water began to open before them.

"Starboard your helm!"

He ran aft to clear the mizzen rigging from a too pro-

minent outrigger, and once clear began to hoist hand over hand on the main halliards, setting the sail like a board with the purchase.

"Starboard!"

He pulled with an oar to clear them through the entrance. It had been quiet in the harbour, but a nice breeze was making from the south'ard, and as she drew clear of the pierheads the mainsail filled, and the boom, which had been fidgetting and chafing, with a scrape and a bang settled to work.

Brent hauled in the jib sheets and went aft to get the mizzen on her. Philippa watched, secretly terrified that he would fall overboard. She tried to remember the instructions he had given her for such a contingency: was it put the helm up or down? What was it he had said: "Then you see you won't go racing away from me." But was it starboard or port?

"Let me take her, Philippa. You've got her up in the wind."

He jumped into the cock-pit, and took the helm: the *Magic* heeled, and the water began to talk and chuckle round her.

"We'll reach across to Mullstone," he said. "There's a soldier's wind both ways. By gad, she's moving now! If one can ease one's sheet a bit there's no doubt she can shift. Get the log, and let's see what we are making."

She went into the cabin and fetched the log.

"We'll heave to presently and have breakfast. Getting hungry, Philippa?"

She nodded.

"Ravenous."

"Enjoying yourself?"

She lifted her joyous young face to the wind, and laughed.

His eyes rested on her keenly for a moment, then went back to the sea.

"If I were a philanthropist with a heap of money," she

said slowly, "I should build a lot of boats and appoint skippers to them, and then give all the London poor a week's cruising in them."

"They'd be sea-sick all the time."

"Oh, I hadn't thought of that."

She stood in the cock-pit leaning her elbows on the cabin roof, gazing out over the sea.

"Otherwise, wouldn't it be a splendid thing?" she said. "To take them—all stuffed up with sordidness and poverty and lack of air—and let *this* get into them! The wind, and the salt and the smell! O-oh, isn't she moving now? I love the way she tears, yet glides, through the water."

She sat down and turned her attention to the dinghey being towed behind.

"She's out of breath, Michael, poor little thing. Come along then! Oh, the lovely, lovely white water breaking all round her. My face is all wet and my lips are salty, and oh, what a world it is!"

"It isn't bad, is it?" he said.

She went on murmuring to the dinghey.

"Michael," she said presently. "May I haul in the log?"

He smiled.

"If you like."

She jumped up eagerly, and began to haul in the line.

"Just over six miles!"

He looked at the watch on his wrist.

"We left Tregarra at twenty minutes to seven—eight o'clock now—nearly eight knots. That's pretty good."

She dropped the log back into the water, and stood leaning against the combing, looking out.

"You might begin to see about breakfast, don't you think?" he suggested. "Can you manage down there with her moving like this, or shall we heave to now?"

"Oh, no, I love it, I bump into everything, it's so exciting."

She went down into the cabin, and bending low, made

her way into the fo'c's'le. "One for my hip and one for my elbow!" She counted her bruises as she sat down on the locker, and began to set about lighting the stove. A wail of woe reached Brent.

"It's flaring right up to the ceiling!"

"Come up and take the helm. Keep her going as she is."

Philippa, at the helm, studied the mainsail and the horizon alternately.

"Don't let her come up in the wind!" came Brent's voice. "Put your helm up a bit."

Then he re-appeared.

"Stove's going beautifully now. Cut along with the breakfast."

"I'm sure I shall eat the rashers half fried! Oh!"

The exclamation came from the cabin.

"Another bump?"

"Yes, on my head."

"You'll soon get used to the limited head room."

Presently to him at the helm stole the smell of coffee and frying bacon: Philippa's head poked up through the hatch: "Does it smell good?" Her cheeks were flushed from the heat of the stove; her eyes were shining; in her white woolly cap and sweater she looked like an impudent schoolboy.

"I'm going to heave to!" he rejoined.

"Shall I help?"

"I can manage, thanks."

She watched with absorbed interest while he put the helm down, hauled the jib sheet to windward, and trimmed the mainsail and mizzen till she was balanced, then came along the deck to her.

"Are you going to leave her without anyone at the helm now?"

"Yes: she'll just jog along comfortably about two miles an hour. I'm after that bacon and coffee."

Philippa bobbed down to her stove again, and he swung

his legs over the edge of the hatch and dropped to the floor beside her.

"Will you just poke the bacon for a minute, Michael? I do want to go on deck, and smell it from there."

"Right you are."

She made her way through the cabin, and up on to the deck: she stood a moment, and gave a long look all round.

"I'm getting my sea legs!" she called joyfully. "Yes; it smells good. There's a lovely great schooner on the horizon. I *think* it's a schooner."

Brent put his head through the hatch.

"Brigantine," he said. "Probably coal."

"That wonderful thing only for coal! I'm going to cut some bread to fry. I've laid the table."

In a few minutes they were seated at breakfast in the little white and green cabin.

"Feel all right, Philippa?"

"Don't be insulting. I've not felt a qualm even in the fo'c's'le since that first sail."

"You look a lot better than you did in London."

Her eyes grew thoughtful.

"Think of the different air here and in Prince's Road. I wrote to Isabella yesterday."

"Did you give this address?"

"No, I didn't give any, and I signed my name as Mademoiselle. Wasn't that wily? You see, I didn't tell a fib, did I?"

"No, you didn't tell a fib. May I have some more coffee?"

"I didn't want to put Hamilton, I do like to wriggle round a fib if I can. But I haven't given anything away, have I?"

"No," he smiled. "Only I shouldn't have thought there was any necessity to write to that horrible red-haired little brat."

"Oh, Michael, the poor little soul is so fond of me! She'll be so frightfully proud to have a letter from me. And

they were awfully good the way they let me go without any bother, and apparently with no better reason than mere caprice."

"It would have been infernal cheek if they had made any objection."

She began to laugh.

"Arthur compiled a riddle on my going."

"Oh. What was it?"

"It isn't very refined."

"Queer. His wit usually is."

"He asked: 'Why are young ladies like a flea?' And the answer was: 'Because they're always on the hop!' "

"And did you laugh when he compounded this delicate wit?"

"Shrieked," she said cheerfully. "I always do at his jokes. I can't help it."

He went on with his breakfast in silence.

"When he imitated you one night I laughed more than ever!" she said mischievously.

"Oh, I'm glad I'm amusing second-hand, if not first."

"He looked so lovely strutting about with his big nose in the air, and frowning till his eyebrows nearly hid his eyes, and then posing with his head downbent and his chin in his hand, glowering up under his eyebrows. It was lovely."

"So I strut about with my nose in the air, and frown and pose, do I? And you found it amusing to have a little bounder like that taking me off?"

"He never said he was thinking of you, and Mrs. Smith was so funny! For once in her life she refused to smile and pursed up her lips, and anyway I didn't dream I should ever marry you then."

"I should have thought you'd think it was pretty impudent on his part anyway."

"I suppose I ought, but I didn't. Those very funny people get to be like clowns at a circus, you never dream of taking them seriously. I expect that's where they pay the

penalty of their excessive wit, if they came to one and said they were broken-hearted one would only wait for a joke to follow about bits of 'art, or something like that."

Brent smiled.

"Philippa, do you regret the Professor?" he said suddenly.

She laughed.

"Poor old Professor! I wonder if he has a housekeeper yet."

"I hope she's old and fat and will bully him to death."

"Oh, Michael!"

He went up on deck and had a look round, then came down again.

"Marmalade?" she said.

"Thanks. And you think this beats the Professor's situation?"

"Rather! Imagine the Professor aboard the *Magic,* having breakfast in this ducky little cabin. I'm sure he'd be nervous and fussy, and would bump his head and have a terrible headache——" she broke off. "I'm rather mean," she said. "After all, he has been most frightfully kind to me."

Brent said nothing.

## CHAPTER II

PHILIPPA sat in the window seat of her room and looked out thoughtfully over the valley down to where a blue strip lay, a gleam of sunshine catching it here and there. A south-westerly breeze was blowing, it was a glorious sailing day, she thought. Brent's voice called to her:

"How about a sail, Philippa?"

"When?" she answered.

"High tide ten o'clock—we'd better go now."

"All right."

She rose, picking up the hat that lay beside her on the window seat: she put it on, staring, still thoughtfully, at herself in the mirror.

Brent was waiting in the porch.

"You'll be cold in that frock," he said impatiently.

"My sweater's down in the locker."

"Well, you'd better put on a thicker skirt. Don't dawdle."

"I don't want a thicker skirt."

"Rubbish."

She stood a minute, then began to walk down the path to the gate.

"Aren't you going to change?" he said.

"No."

"Why not? Because I suggested it?"

She turned a frowning face on him.

"You didn't suggest it. You ordered it. As far as I know a housekeeper may dress as she pleases."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"As you will," he said.

They walked on down the road; as he followed her across the flat stone stile he said lightly:

"But I think a housekeeper ought to be better tempered."

"Do you?"

He caught her up and walked across the meadow in silence.

"Pining for gaiety and town?" he said.

"No. In any case, it is for you to decide where we go."

"Of course."

A little colour flickered in her cheek. He stood on the next stile. "By gad, what a sea! It's a topping breeze."

He jumped into the next field.

"Come along," he cried. "We'll make Penwithen Cove with this breeze. You'd like that?"

"Oh yes."

"Step out then. I wish I could have got a house nearer the harbour."

"Oh, I don't know. I love this walk down to it. I love the way the sea suddenly breaks upon you at that stile."

"All very well, but I want to make a start."

They did not speak again till they were swinging down the steep road that led to the harbour.

"Lord, what a picture!" he said then. The little harbour at the foot of the hill seemed to lie in a haze of blue smoke: nets were being dried, men calling to each other, there was a sense of business that always excited Philippa. Friendly voices hailed Brent, friendly hands helped him push out of harbour, someone made a joke about the skipper, meaning Philippa at the helm. She watched Brent's face, his hand, terrified that she would disgrace herself. She had got beyond that repeating to herself—"Port—left; starboard—right," but she was still anxious while getting out of the harbour.

They had a glorious sail: no premonition of trouble worried her, rather the sense of irritation that latterly

sometimes assailed her with regard to Brent, was soothed away.

Yet when they had returned and rowed to the slipway, she looked back regretfully at the little green yacht.

"I shall have to lay her up presently," Brent said. "The end of October is quite late for these parts."

She took his hand and jumped lightly on to the slipway.

"It's slippery," Brent said.

A voice rang out cheerfully:

"Hulloa! There you are!"

She thought afterwards that she had known before she lifted her head and saw him; yet she could hardly have recognized his voice. But she lifted her head slowly, unwillingly, and her eyes went draggingly to the spot where he stood. She saw his face change, then he came forward smiling.

"Routed you out, Uncle Mike! Quite by chance too. Saw a wire addressed to you at Trewedgwick Post Office. Queer, wasn't it? No one knows where you are."

Brent nodded.

"Let me introduce you to my wife, Dick," he said stiffly.

"Your—*wife!* Good Lord! I'm sorry, but—er—I had no idea you were married—Congrats, you know, and all that." He took her cold hand into his, and shook it heartily. "What do you think of your nephew?" he said laughingly.

Philippa's pale lips moved in a stiff smile. Brent turned and looked back at his boat.

"Stowed that mainsail all right this time," he muttered. "She's all right."

"Is that your boat, Mike? The little green yacht?"

He nodded.

"What do you think of her?"

Dick Charters stood and studied her, and Philippa's frightened eyes surreptitiously studied him. Yes, it was the young man she had made take her to the Garrick. There could be no doubt of it, although he was in flannels now with

an old green hat rammed on his head. It was the same clean-cut open face, the same broad-shouldered tall figure. . . . Did he remember her? Surely not. Yet—she had seen the look of surprise flash across his face. She knew that he remembered her, had no doubt about it at all. She was grateful to him, oh, so grateful for his ready tact. To have Michael know! To see his cold eyes studying her, as if she were some strange object of interest! He looked at her rather like that sometimes now. She was, in her heart, a little afraid of him. She had been married a month; they had had some lovely times, but—there were moments when the realization that she was legally bound to him, swept terrifyingly upon her. They always passed, with the self-assurance that the agreement had been that they could, at any time, agree to separate. But now, for the first time, a doubt crept into her heart: she shivered as she stood there looking up at Dick Charters, shivered with a new-born fear that she had made a mistake. She turned away and began to walk slowly up the little cobbled alley that led to the road.

## CHAPTER III

"PHILIPPA, can you give me a few minutes?"

She turned nervously.

"Didn't you like your dinner?"

"It was an excellent dinner, but I prefer thin soup with that menu."

"I will remember. Is that what you wanted me for?"

"No. It's only half-past nine. Are you going to bed?"

"I was, but I can stay, if you want me."

"Thank you. Won't you sit down?"

She sat down, her heart beating terrifyingly. Could Dick Charters have told him? She was sure not, yet—what did his cold manner portend?

"I won't keep you long," he said.

"I don't mind," she said in a polite little voice.

He was silent. The light from the lamp on the table fell across his face. She studied it anxiously, but found it inscrutable: she fancied it was perhaps a little grimmer than usual, but decided the next moment that it was not.

"I didn't give those poor Michaelmas daisies fresh water this morning," she said. "I like them in that silver jar, don't you?"

"Dick raved over them," he said. "He's gone for a walk along the cliffs. You've met him before?"

So it was that! And in that cold, matter-of-fact voice. She lifted her head, and her terror vanished: anger had taken its place.

"Is that what you want to speak to me about?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I think I have the right."

"Oughtn't you to have required a character with me in the first place?"

"Don't get silly, Philippa."

She was silent. So he knew! She wondered how much he knew.

"Did he tell you?" she said.

"Dick? Good Lord, no. You shouldn't say things like that."

She was amazed.

"Then how——"

"I saw you with him in the stalls the Christmas Eve before last."

She grasped the arms of the Winchester chair in which she sat: she tried to think what it meant, but in her bewildered brain only a few vague words nagged—over and over again—"My uncle—up in that box"—"My uncle—up in that box." There had been more: what were they? "My uncle—up in that box—now he'll be bothering." What else?— Ah, she had it! "They always do, if *they've been that sort themselves!*" A flame of scarlet dyed her face from brow to chin. That was it! And he—thought she was that sort too! She sprang to her feet. "I'm not!" the words choked in her throat, she stood gazing down at him, and all the while she was conscious of another thought behind this agony of shame, an elusive feeling of surprise: she did not go so far as to analyse it, but it was there, further bewildering her. "There is no need to get so upset," his voice broke the silence sharply. "Sit down, Philippa!"

"What do you want to say? If you have known all the while," she broke off bewilderedly. "How long have you known?"

"I recognized you that first evening in Anne's flat."

"Why didn't you say anything?"

"I thought you'd rather I didn't," he said drily.

The red surged in her face again.

"Why?" she said haughtily.

He looked up at her quietly.

"Hadn't you better sit down?"

She sat down.

"Well?"

"When Dick came to me for Christmas Day, I asked him whom he had been with the night before."

She waited.

"He said he didn't know!"

"Yes?"

"Queer sort of reply, don't you think? He further got very red, and when I pressed the matter said it was a young actress, and he didn't see why he should tell me her name; anyway he had had a ripping evening, and hoped he'd have many more as exciting."

This version was new to Philippa: she turned it over in her mind.

"What did you do then?"

"Do? Nothing. I hoped inwardly that she was not alluringly fascinating and would not lure him on to anything terrible. That was the end of the matter."

She thought it over: her mind was calmer now, she felt cold and hostile.

"Why did you engage me as your housekeeper-wife?" she said.

He raised his eyebrows.

"Why not? I have nothing to complain of in the way you fill the post."

She gazed at him with a baffled look in her eyes.

"Why are you saying all this n-now?" she asked, and there was a tremble in her voice.

"Because I saw you and Dick recognize each other, and thinking it over, I've come to the conclusion that

you owe me the explanation of your acquaintance with him."

"You should have procured my character when you engaged me: it's too late now."

He was silent awhile.

"Aren't you going to tell me anything, Philippa?"

"No."

A strange wonder flashed across her mind: would he strike her? She waited, her lips parted.

"Isn't it rather childish to make all this mystery over a few hours spent at the play?" he said sarcastically. And she was conscious of the quick hysterical thought that she would sooner he had struck her!

"I'm not making any mystery. I do not want to talk about it to you."

"Yet you told me a long while ago that your father died that night."

She sat up, startled.

"When? What do you mean?"

"That night when we had supper at the Savoy."

"I remember," she said in a low voice.

"Hadn't you better tell me about it?"

"Why should I? You wouldn't be in the least interested, and if you feel doubtful about my character, I'm quite willing to go."

"Aren't you rather foolish? Why should I feel any more doubtful now, than I have all along?"

"I don't know. I don't care. I only know you're bullying me, and I'm sure it's going beyond our compact."

He looked amused.

"Very well," he said. "You're a funny child."

He picked up the book he had been reading, and turned the leaves.

She sat, impotent, assailed stormily by various emotions: she said in a low voice at last:

"I'd sooner go."

"Go where?" He looked up from his book.

"Go away! You know what I mean. We said that if it didn't answer we'd agree to separate——"

"But I think it answers perfectly. I'm getting quite sleek and fat under your good management. I don't agree at all."

She rose hurriedly.

"I shall go all the same!" she said in a strangled sort of voice.

"Give in like that? There's nothing to be afraid of, Philippa——"

"*Afraid!* I'm not afraid!" her voice shook now.

"Then why run away?"

"Because——" She stood, breathing hard. "I think you're insulting!"

"Melodrama again! When will you grow up? I've merely questioned you because I thought it might be pleasanter for you to know that I knew about it, as Dick is going to stay here awhile."

"Is he?" the words sprang from her lips involuntarily.

"Pleased?"

"I know why you ask me that!"

"Really? Why?"

"You wanted to hurt me. You haven't hurt me!"

"I'm glad of that."

He turned to his book.

"Are you going?" he said.

"Yes: to-morrow."

"It's giving yourself away to Dick, which is a pity isn't it?"

She was trembling.

"How?"

"He'll think he has frightened you away."

"I don't care!"

But she knew that she did care: she stood, at a loss.

"It's not playing the game, is it? To stay with me as

long as things are smooth, and to leave the first moment they go a bit wrong?" he said.

"I'll stay," she said in a small voice, and hurried to the door.

"That's right. Good-night."

"Good-night."

## CHAPTER IV

"AUNTIE, I want to talk to you, may I?"

She laughed.

"You generally do, don't you?"

His eyes grew serious.

"A proper talk, Philippa. Will you let me?"

She looked up at him, and shrank back a little.

"Is—there any need, Dick?"

"I think so."

"You've been so—kind, so good——"

"Rot! I'm going to be much nicer now, if you'll let me be. Will you walk over to Porthgavan this afternoon with me?"

She hesitated, her head downbent: the study door outside which they were standing, opened, and Brent came out, carrying some papers.

Philippa jumped and grew scarlet.

"Philippa, did you write about those books?"

"Yes, Michael."

He went across the hall and into a room on the other side.

"Oh, I've left all the dead flowers lying around!" she exclaimed. "He does hate it so!"

"What's the odds? Will you come this afternoon?"

"Philippa, hadn't you better clear away this mess in here?"

"Oh yes, Michael." She ran along the passage. "Yes, I'll come, Dick."

"The wet stalks have been lying on to-day's paper," Brent said frowning, as she entered.

"I'm sorry; they haven't done much harm, have they?"

"Would you prefer Mary to do the flowers?"

She looked up surprised.

"Oh no! Why?"

"You seem to find them rather an overwhelming task."

"I should think something I've given you has disagreed with you!" she said coldly.

"Perhaps it's having the same savoury two nights running."

She flushed a little.

"It was a mistake. You can't say I often do that sort of thing, Michael!"

"I shouldn't think of saying it: you don't."

She gathered up the dead flowers onto a tray.

"How you manage so well is a mystery to me," he said.

She laughed.

"Oh, it's very simple; you're not hard to please."

"And Dick is young, and doesn't mind what he eats so long as it is served prettily, eh?"

"Yes."

He picked up a book and left the room.

Dick had been with them for a week, and until that morning, their former acquaintance had never been touched upon by either Dick or Philippa.

The strain had told upon her; she could not feel natural and at her ease with him: she was forced into self-consciousness, a state so unnatural to her, that it was like a torture. That day luncheon was worse than usual: she shrank from the thought of the talk before her, yet in a way felt that she welcomed it.

"Philippa, could you give me an hour or so this afternoon?" Brent asked at the end of the meal.

She hesitated.

"Oh, of course——"

"Is it important, Mike? We were going to walk over to Porthgavan," Dick put in.

"No, not at all; to-morrow morning will do just as well."

"I'd rather stay this afternoon, Michael."

"I'd rather you went for your walk. More beer, Dick?"

When she was ready to start she tapped on the study door and went in.

"I wish you would let me stay," she said restlessly.

"My dear child, do try to learn not to fuss over trifles."

"What did you want me to do?"

"Only arrange those two boxes of books on those shelves, and make a list of them under the authors' names. To-morrow will do."

She went out and joined Dick.

"We'll strike across country and trust to luck," he said.

They climbed a hedge in silence and went on across a meadow: at the stile she paused.

"I forgot an order I want to give to Mary. I must go back."

"Won't it do later?"

She shook her head.

"It's about dinner, terribly important."

They turned back.

"I'll wait for you here."

She left him by the hedge and ran lightly back to the house. As she entered the open door she heard Brent's voice speaking to someone in his study. She gave her order to Mary.

"Who is in the study, Mary?" she asked.

Mary looked surprised.

"Mr. Brent, ma'am."

"I know, but there's a visitor, isn't there?"

"Not that I know of, ma'am."

"I think there is: I heard voices, I'm sure."

"I think you must be mistaken, ma'am."

Philippa left the kitchen; as she went out of the hall door she heard Brent laugh. She rejoined Dick.

"I haven't been long, have I? Michael has a visitor. I wonder if someone else has found us out."

"Probably; it's the sort of thing that always happens."

Her step slackened.

"I'd sooner talk now, if we've got to," she said.

"Right you are. Let's get across the next meadow, and we shall be able to see the sea."

They crossed the field and sat on a ledge of grey stone, sheltered from the sharp little northerly breeze by the hedge.

"This is rather jolly," he said with a sigh of contentment. "It'll be jollier still if the pilchard boats come round that headland. I hope they come down westward this evening."

She sat silent, her eyes fixed on the sea, but seeing all the while a crowded theatre, a stage, Bourchier, a boy beside her, and then—her dead father.

"I can't see the idea of old Mike bringing you here," he said abruptly.

"Why?" she asked listlessly. "It's quiet and out of the world. We wanted that."

"But so is his own little place."

"His boat was here: he had left her here, and people call and that sort of thing in your own place."

"There's no one to call," he persisted.

"He wanted to get on with his book on naval architecture, and be quite quiet," she said uninterestedly. "I wanted Cornwall and freedom and nothing else for a while."

"Is that why your marriage is being kept such a dead secret?"

"Yes: to ensure quiet."

"No one knows?"

"Except Anne Forsythe. I wrote to her the day after we were married."

He was silent for awhile.

"Oh well, it's nothing to do with me," he said rousing himself.

"No," she agreed.

"By Jove, isn't that slope down to the sea a marvel of colour? The dead heather and the granite, and the bracken against that sky. Wonder if I could make anything of it." He framed it with his hands, studying it.

She waited patiently for the talk to begin.

He turned to her at last.

"Philippa, I've been thinking," he said gently. "Wouldn't it make things easier to have them out?"

"I don't know."

"It's for you to decide, of course. I don't want to worry you. But you know that I recognized you, and I know you recognized me. Say the word, and I'll begin our acquaintanceship from the other day. I'll never give that Christmas Eve another thought."

She turned her head and looked into his eager friendly face: her eyes filled suddenly with tears.

"I think I would rather tell you how I—I came to—to——"

"To let me take you to the play. Would you really? I should like awfully to know how it happened, if you're sure you don't mind. I'm afraid I was an awful young fool that night, but I was very young, you know, and for the life of me I—I couldn't place you——"

"Why did you tell Michael I was an actress?"

"Eh? Good Lord, then old Mike knows who you are? Of course he saw you from his box——"

"Why did you?"

He took off his hat and put it on again; he pulled a piece of moss off the ledge they were sitting on, and his tanned face reddened a little.

"Why did you tell him that? Did you think I was an actress?"

His blue eyes looked at her appealingly. "No, I knew you weren't."

"Then why——"

"I'm afraid—I don't know if you'll understand—I'm

afraid I said it to make him think I was a bit of a dog, you know. I'm afraid you won't understand. I was very young."

She burst out laughing.

"Oh, but I do understand! It's just the sort of thing I might have done if I'd been a man!"

He laughed delightedly.

"Really? How awfully jolly of you! I hoped he'd think you were a brilliant, rather naughty, irresistible young actress. I stuffed him up with what an exciting evening I'd had——"

"And it was so very different really!" she said smiling. "I must have bored you terribly."

"Well, you did rather," he agreed frankly. "We were rather dull, weren't we? You wouldn't talk, and what was much worse, you wouldn't listen when I talked to you! You were just absorbed by the stupid play."

"It was my first play," she said in a low voice.

"What? Not really?"

"Yes: I'd never been inside a theatre before."

"Good Lord! No wonder you grabbed at the chance—oh, I say, I beg your pardon, I forgot——"

She turned to him, her dark eyes glowing. "You couldn't have said anything I liked better! I believe now you will understand, oh, I believe you will!"

"I think I shall," he said gently. "You tell me."

She told him, badly perhaps, for she could not bring herself to bare heart and soul to him, but her face and voice were more expressive than the stiff words. He did not move or speak until she ended quietly: "When I got home my father was dead. He had died suddenly, that evening. It was his heart."

He stretched out his hand and laid it on hers for a moment.

"You poor child, oh, you poor child!" he said.

She was silent: they sat watching the pilchard boats come sailing round the headland, their tan sails against the sky.

And presently there came to her that old sound of her childhood, the sound she loved so well, the rattle of the sheaves in the blocks, as they lowered sail, before shooting their nets.

"I wasn't there when he died," she said in a low voice.

"If it was his heart you could have done nothing."

She was silent again, and another boat shot her nets, and again she heard the rattle of the sheaves in the blocks. Then at last it was out, the fear that had never left her, the secret thought that she had put from her again and again, but that had always been there—deep down—hidden away —always there, and never till now spoken of.

"If a shock killed him—it may have been the shock of hearing what I had done."

"Oh, don't say that!" he cried out. "You mustn't say things like that!"

She looked at him with hard eyes: his face was shocked.

"Anyway, how would he have known?"

"Mrs. Harris may have told him; she said she had. Dr. Santon said they always love to pile on the agony. I tried to think that. But—if anyone has a weak heart, a shock kills them, and——"

"I'm sure you're wrong," he interrupted. "The doctor was right; I'm sure he was right. Don't talk like that, Philippa."

She was silent.

"Did you tell Mike all this?"

She shook her head.

"Why didn't you?"

"I—couldn't somehow."

"Yet he saw you that night with me, and knows I was mysterious about you."

"He knew that before he married me," she said coldly. "Shall we go back?"

He rose silently, and they began to walk across the meadow.

"Philippa, I wish I could help you. It was awfully jolly of you to tell me. I wish I could tell you how sorry I am. Lord, that poor little girl all alone there makes me feel ill!"

She smiled.

"You have helped me."

"Really? You're not sorry you told me?"

"I'm glad," she said simply.

"That's splendid of you. I'm glad too. Now we can be real friends, can't we?"

"Yes," she said.

They went on to the house, he talking in his eager, boyish way about the pictures he wanted to paint down there.

Brent was standing in the porch smoking.

"Your visitor has gone then, Michael?" Philippa said, as she passed into the hall.

"Visitor? No one has been here."

She paused surprised.

"Earlier in the afternoon," she said.

He shook his head.

"No one's been to see me."

Dick laughed.

"Philippa told me someone else had routed you out now."

"I heard you talking to someone, Michael, surely?"

He frowned impatiently.

"I've told you you're mistaken, Philippa."

She reddened a little.

"Anyhow you were talking aloud, even if it was to yourself!" she said coldly, and passed on, going towards the staircase.

"When do you mean? How did you hear? I read aloud sometimes—to get the effect of what I've written."

"She came back to give Mary some important order about dinner," Dick said. "Don't be long upstairs, auntie, I want my tea."

"Oh—ah—I was reading some stuff of mine aloud."

"I never knew before that naval architecture could be made so amusing, as to cause great mirth to the reader!" Philippa said crossly through the balusters.

"Didn't you?" Brent said blandly.

## CHAPTER V

PHILIPPA plaited her thick hair into a long pigtail, and threw it over her shoulder; then she stood gazing before her. She felt restless, not at all inclined to go to bed. She decided suddenly not to undress yet, and fastening her white dressing-gown sat down before the empty grate, and took up a book. But she could not read; her thoughts were back in that afternoon's talk with Dick; his face came between her and her book. Then she heard his voice outside:

"Good-night. I say, Mike, don't you think we might force that lock? My room doesn't look out over the sea. I'd much sooner have one of the locked-up ones."

And Michael's voice:

"It was inconsiderate of the owner to lock up a wing with such a glorious view."

"Wonder if there're treasures hidden in them," came Dick's voice. "I'm sure there are, or what's-his-name Hosking wouldn't always let his old stolid Mary with the place."

"Family trophies—probably most uninteresting. Good-night, old man."

"'night."

Doors closing, then silence. Philippa looked at the watch on her table: five minutes to eleven. She smiled over Dick's words: she sympathised with his curiosity about the closed wing: she had caught him following Mary stealthily one day when she was unlocking the great oak door to enter the wing. Mary had looked round before turning the handle, and had stared stolidly at him, waiting for him to go. She alone entered that wing, and Dick had had to retreat, much to Philippa's amusement.

"I believe old Mary's got a young man she keeps in there! She's always popping in and out!" he said to her.

"She's just the sort who would have," Philippa had rejoined.

"Oh, you can never tell. That would explain why she's so hard on that poor lumpy girl who comes to help or something every day. Jealousy, you see! Why doesn't Mike have any of *his* servants down?"

"We get on very well as we are."

"Oh, wonderful. You, I suppose?"

"Of course."

He had gone off laughing.

"I think poor Willie would like to have a chat with me!" he had called back. "Some day I'll climb in at a window!"

She shivered now at the thought of William: a ghost was terrifying enough anyway, but a half-witted ghost was awful beyond words! She put down her book, and went across to the window, and kneeling on the window-seat, looked out over the soft grey moonlit meadows; she made out a cow here and there, a darker or a lighter spot in the beautiful indefinite colours. She could hear the sea rolling in with a soft, booming sound, on the rocks; the smell of it came to her with a piercing freshness. She stretched out her arms into the gentle night.

"I love you! I love you!" she whispered.

She heard a door open, the flump of a pair of boots put down, then the door closed. She turned from the window shivering from the cold air. At the back of her mind a thought was worrying her: the thought of the two boxes of books down in the study waiting to be put on the shelves, and to be listed with their authors' names. She had not dared to suggest doing it that evening: she knew that nothing annoyed Michael more than for her to do any work after tea-time. But she had a childish eagerness to seize at any work he wanted her to do, the outcome of an unsuspected womanly shrinking from his mere charity: she wanted to do her share, to earn her salary fairly.

Dick's voice rang out:

"'Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine——'"

Silence. That meant he was in bed; he always burst out into song as he sprang into bed. Another door opened—this was Michael's door—another pair of boots were put down outside, the door closed.

Philippa had made up her mind: she picked up her little table-lamp, and opening the door, crept down the stairs to the study. She was going to do the books now: it was just the sort of thing she wanted to do. Wouldn't Michael be surprised in the morning?

She stood her lamp on a table, and went across to the two great cases of books: they had been opened ready for her. She took out a book on architecture and put it on a shelf. She had filled one shelf and was beginning another when a sound made her turn nervously: Brent stood in the doorway watching her. She dropped the book, and stooped to pick it up.

"I'm sorry I startled you," he said coming forward. "Especially as it made you drop my poor book."

"I don't think I've hurt it. I thought you had gone to bed," she said nervously.

"No. I came down to get something to read. Why are you doing that at this time of night, Philippa?"

"I didn't want to go to bed. I—thought doing this might make me sleepy——"

He lifted the lamp he held, and his eyes studied her quizzically. "What a funny little black head you've got! And what a child you look with your hair down."

She looked at him with a little smile. "You're not cross then!" she said in a relieved tone.

His brows came together in their quick frown.

"Am I such a bogey as all that?"

"You are rather," she said seriously.

"Um. You're not to go on with that job now, bogey

or no bogey, young lady. That's the wrong binding surely? Let me look at that book you've got."

She held it out to him, it slipped; in catching it before it fell, their hands touched.

"Why, you're as cold as ice! Give me your hand."

She held it out: he took it in his warm grasp.

"Frozen. How's that?"

"It has turned cold, I think, and I was looking out of my window——"

"Sort of thing you would do," he said grimly. "I'm going to light a fire: we'll sit by it, and I'll read to you till you get sleepy, shall I?"

"What fun! I'll help, Michael. There's fire wood in the kitchen cupboard. Let's make a *big* fire."

"A roarer," he said cheerfully. "You watch me lay a fire, it's one of my few accomplishments. Is that thing you've got on warm?"

"Warranted all wool," she laughed.

"It's very pretty," he said seriously. "This'll be enough wood."

She stood and watched him lay and light the fire: she exclaimed when he poured paraffin lavishly over wood and coal.

"Why not? I always use it," he said unruffled.

"You ought not, if I object; that comes within my province. I should not think of allowing Mary to do it."

He smiled.

"Can you imagine such a thing? She's much too old-fashioned."

She moved her foot restlessly along the stone curb.

"Michael, she's almost like a housekeeper, isn't she?"

"Not a bit. You don't think she's like you, do you? And you're the ideal housekeeper."

She watched the little flames leaping over the crackling wood.

"As a matter of fact I don't believe she'd be any good at all except to carry out orders, she'd lose her head at

once, and become as flurried and idiotic as a kitchen maid."

She looked astonished.

"But she looks so fearfully sensible and stolid and middle-aged!"

"She's certainly middle-aged, rather more than middle-aged, but for the rest, I'm sure she has a hopelessly frivolous, trivial mind! Haven't you discovered yet that one can never judge character from face?"

"I think one can."

"I wonder how long you'll retain that belief. What do you make my character from my face?"

She laughed.

"Perhaps you wouldn't like to hear."

"I should immensely."

She shook her head.

"You tell me mine," she said.

"From your face?"

"Yes."

"Gentle, sweet, patient and good."

"How sarcastic you are!"

"I don't think you'd like me to tell you what I really think."

"I shouldn't mind a bit."

"I think you might. I'm not going to risk it anyway. You sit there in that chair; here's another cushion, put your red toes up on the curb, they're very chic, those red slippers. Now, are you comfortable?"

"Lovely."

"What shall I read to you? Something to send you to sleep?"

"You choose."

"I'm afraid you've a lazy mind, Philippa. We'll have Palgrave's Golden Treasury, and I'll read at random."

He fetched the book and settled himself down in a chair opposite her.

The clock on the mantelshelf struck twelve, half-past,

and then one, before he put the book down. Philippa had hardly opened her mouth; cuddled amongst the cushions in the big chair she listened contentedly.

"You're like a horrid little cat," he said as he put down the book. "I believe you're purring."

"I should be if I knew how."

"Aren't you going to thank me for reading all that?"

"No. What's that?" she sat erect. "There's someone coming down the stairs!"

He rose leisurely.

"Dick, I expect. You stay there. I'll go and see."

"I forgot Dick," she said with a little laugh. "I felt quite frightened."

He went into the hall: she heard his voice:

"No thieves, old man, only me reading aloud to Philippa, to make us sleepy."

He came back and closed the door.

"He was coming down to see if anything was wrong. Now, shall I read any more? Or aren't you sleepy?"

"Why didn't he answer?"

"Yawning too hard. You ought to be yawning too."

"I'm not a bit. I didn't hear his door open, did you? It always opens with a sort of bang, you know."

"No, I didn't hear it. I think I'll read one more thing to you, and then pack you off to bed."

But he stood by the mantelshelf, his head bent, his eyes on her.

She looked up and met his gaze.

"What's that thing you're wearing, Philippa?"

"A tea-gown," she answered demurely.

"Is it? I like your hair done like that."

"It's beautifully comfortable."

He took a cigarette from a box and lit it. "Why aren't you sleepy to-night?" he said abruptly.

"I don't know. Why aren't you?"

"Perhaps my conscience keeps me awake."

"Perhaps mine keeps *me* awake."

"Yours!"

"Why not?"

He gave a short laugh, wheeled round, and picked up a little book bound in vellum.

"I'm going to read you a bit——" he muttered, and opening the book towards the end, plunged into the poem:

"'But if I live with Idas, then we two
On the low earth shall prosper hand in hand
In odours of the open field, and live
In peaceful noises of the farm, and watch
The pastoral fields burned by the setting sun.
And he shall give me passionate children, not
Some radiant god that will despise me quite,
But clambering limbs and little hearts that err.
And I shall sleep beside him in the night,
And fearful from some dream shall touch his hand
Secure; or at some festival we two
Will wander through the lighted city streets;
And in the crowd I'll take his arm and feel
Him closer for the press. So shall we live."

He paused, and glanced up at Philippa, frowning heavily.

"Like it?"

"It's beautiful. What is it?"

"'Marpessa,' by Stephen Phillips."

"Who was Marpessa? Was she the one who had the choice between Apollo and a mortal—I forget his name——"

"Idas. Yes. And chose Idas."

"Aren't you going to finish it?"

"It's getting so late. I'll read the last lines—or some of them."

"'Then though we must grow old, we shall grow old
Together, and he shall not greatly miss
My bloom faded, and waning light of eyes,
Too deeply gazed in ever to seem dim;
Nor shall we murmur at, nor much regret
The years that gently bend us to the ground,
And gradually incline our face; that we
Leisurely stooping, and with each slow step,

May curiously inspect our lasting home.
But we shall sit with luminous holy smiles,
Endeared by many griefs, by many a jest,
And custom sweet of living side by side;'"

He stopped abruptly and put the book down.

"That's what you throw aside!" he said fiercely.

Her eyes were full of tears: she looked at him, frightened: through trembling lips she defied the aching wonder she felt.

"That's not ordinary, modern life."

"It's life, you foolish child! It was life then, and it's life now! Who are you to think you know better than others?"

"I do—for me! I don't regret anything."

"No: but you may some day," he muttered. "There, child, go to bed."

She stood up.

"I don't. I never shall."

He took a step towards her, and seized her roughly by her arm.

"Come across to that mirror! Now, look at your face! Look! Are you such a fool as to think you'll be content always—alone? To get old—alone. Never to have known what it is to give away your heart and soul? Look, and tell me whether you're not meant to say 'Marpessa's' words?"

She saw her face in the mirror, pale, scared, with wide dark eyes. . . .

"No! Why are you saying all this now? I've chosen. I'm glad I've chosen!"

He dropped his hand from her arm, and gave a little laugh.

"You're an obstinate little devil, Philippa. There, go to bed."

She turned from the mirror.

"I think it was mean to spoil it like that!" she said petulantly. "And it's silly anyway, because I've

chosen now, and can't go back. And I don't want to!"

"It was very silly," he agreed, and yawned.

She picked up a cushion that had fallen to the ground and patted it.

"Thank you for reading to me," she said.

"Not at all. I hope it has made you sleepy."

"Not a bit!"

"You're hopeless. It has *me!*"

She laughed.

"Is that a hint?"

"I'm afraid it is."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

He bent over the table and extinguished the lamp. Philippa stood at the foot of the little flight of five steps that led up to the door and the hall, her lamp in her hand.

"What are you waiting for?" he said impatiently.

"Oh, I thought you were coming."

"So I am, when I've lit my pipe. You'd better go up quietly."

"All right. Good-night."

"Good-night."

"Michael?"

"What is it now?"

"Oh, nothing!"

She went up a step.

"Don't be absurd, Philippa! Why do you begin a sentence and then stop, and pretend you're frightened?"

"You—sounded so fierce. I only wanted to know if you—if you felt—all that—when you—cared——"

"Oh, that's all you wanted to know, is it? You get along to bed, and don't ask so many questions, young lady."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" She hurried up the next three steps.

"Michael?"

"Well?"

"Only just I—I didn't—it didn't strike me that it was impertinent of me to—to ask you that."

"Well, it was."

"Yes. I'm very sorry. I didn't *mean*——"

"Good God, are you going to stay here all night talking?" he burst out.

Philippa, appalled, opened the door, and ran swiftly up to her room.

## CHAPTER VI

PHILIPPA sang as she put the books on their shelves:

"'Bid me to live, and I will live
Thy Protestant to be——'"

The last one was in its place. Now for paper and pen.

"'Bid me to love and I will give
A loving heart to thee.'"

Oh, what a glorious day it was! She stretched her arms above her head, and yawned. She was alone in the house. Dick had received a wire that morning about some picture frames, and had been obliged to rush off and catch the London train. Brent had decided to go with him. He had asked her if she would mind being alone for one night. She laughed as she thought of it. Mind? It was fun somehow to be alone. She would practise some of the accompaniments to the old English songs Dick was so fond of singing. And she would hunt through the cookery books for some special dainties for them when they came back the next evening. And for the table and rooms, what sort of flowers? She had not much choice, but Dick noticed things like that so much: there were gorgeous leaves everywhere now, and bracken; she wanted Dick to be fearfully admiring. She was very grateful to him; he had been so kind and understanding about that Christmas Eve. Except about her fear that it was the shock of the discovery of her absence that had killed her father: he had seemed to think she ought not to have said that, he had seemed somehow shocked. Perhaps she had blurted it out brutally: she was so used to the horror of the thought that she had not perhaps realized the

effect of it on some one fresh. She put it from her with a little shiver: it was a gruesome thought to companion her on such a beautiful day. She wondered was it warm enough to take lunch and a book out on to the cliffs: she ran out into the garden and stood in the sunshine: then went round to the kitchen window: "Mary, will you make me some ham sandwiches? I'll take my lunch out with me; it's such a glorious day."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Put in one or two of those little cakes you made yesterday, will you? And, Mary, you might polish the study floor to-day, it's a good opportunity."

"Yes, ma'am. If the man from Williams' comes, shall I order some flour?"

"Yes, and we want some methylated spirits, don't we? And marmalade we shall want soon."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And biscuits, Mary, the same as before."

"Yes, ma'am."

Philippa went back into the house, put on her hat and coat, and choosing a volume of Keats' poems, set out for a nook in the rocks on the cliffs, where it seemed to be always hot and always sheltered. She swung along at a good pace till she reached the little grey farm where a certain lurcher lived; here she dawdled, and was rewarded presently by an overwhelming welcome from the lurcher, who was young and exceedingly loving.

"She's some pleased to see you!" an old woman called from the black doorway.

"May she come with me for a walk, Mrs. Harvey?"

"Yes, she may. I'm sure I wish you'd take her altogether for a bit, Mrs. Brent, and Johnny away to Pengavan, and Philip out all day."

"When will Johnny be back?"

"Maybe a month or maybe not so long."

Philippa was sore tempted: she thought rapidly: there were the empty stables: the lurcher could live in there,

with plenty of straw if Michael did not want her in the house.

"I'll take her, Mrs. Harvey. She shall come and live with us till Johnny comes home, and wants her."

The old woman expostulated: Rose was given a terrible character: she had only been having her joke, but in the end Philippa got her way, and went off with the great lurcher in high spirits. She went on along the little footpath in the side of the cliff, climbing boulders, running with Rose, till she reached the great grey rock she sought; a rock covered with grass and dead heather, with another rock behind it that formed a luxurious back-rest. Here she sat down with a sigh of content, while Rose stood and eyed her in mournful disgust. Philippa proceeded to teach her the meaning of "lie down," but found it a difficult task.

"Rose," she said at last, "I believe your soulful face belies you. I'm afraid you've a hopelessly frivolous mind. You can do what you like, only don't fall into the sea."

She took the little Keats from her coat-pocket, but did not open it: she lay back on the rock, and looked out dreamily before her. It was so beautiful, so wonderfully beautiful: the sun shining down on the gorgeous red and gold bracken; on the pinky masses of dead heather, on the grey boulders, some covered with soft, grey-green lichen. So beautiful! And the deep blue sea; she watched a gull circling overhead against the sky. Was there any land like Cornwall? She looked out before her, till sea and sky and cliff began to rock gently to and fro, ever so gently, and then she was lying on the deck of the *Magic,* and they were purring through the blue sea, and Dick was laughing. "We'll go on for ever and ever," he sang.

She sat up and rubbed her eyes, and yawned.

"Oh, why did I sit up?" was her first thought. "I might have rocked to sleep again. Oh, what a lovely, sun-filled sleep. Rose! Rose!" she looked at the watch on her wrist. "I've been asleep for an hour. Rose!"

The lurcher came prancing through the bracken with a dead rabbit in her mouth. Philippa stared at her admiringly.

"Oh, you clever angel! Poor little rabbit, still it's a very ugly one. No, leave it there, Rose, don't pick it up again. Good old Rose." She looked down at the rabbit lying on the rock beside her. "You've a hideous face, even if your tail is sweet, poor little thing. And did you catch it all by yourself, and kill it without a mark, and bring it to mistress, you darling? What's that on your nose? Keep still. Is it blood? How horrid—oh, Rose, it's jam!"

She looked round hastily: she had laid her packet of sandwiches and cakes on the rock. Paper was all that met her eye now, scraps of torn paper. "Oh, Rose, and I'm *so* hungry!"

Rose fell on her back and lay with her legs in the air.

"No, I'm not going to scold you. How should you know? But you might have left me *one* sandwich!"

Rose tore round and round her with her tail between her legs, giving short, excited barks.

"That's all very well for you, but I'm dying of hunger."

Rose seized the rabbit in her mouth and flung it over her head.

"Oh, Rose, put it down! I'm quite sure you oughtn't to play with it! Rose! That's a good girl. Now leave it alone. I shall go home. I'm so hungry."

She got up and stretched her lithe body. "It's not so hot as it was here, anyway," she decided, and set off for home.

Mary was distinctly disapproving over Rose's advent, and refused to suggest where Philippa could procure straw, only wondering aloud what Mr. Brent would say, and how'd she be fed.

Philippa, hearing the pump working outside the kitchen, slipped out to the well, to make inquiries of the freckled youth who came every day to pump up water into the house. He promised to get straw at once, accompanied her into the stables, to inspect them, and gratefully accepted the rabbit.

Philippa, with Rose at her heels, went back into the house, and up to her room. In the corridor she paused, dilating her nostrils: there was a faint, elusive scent hanging about. What was it? She looked round puzzled, went to the corridor window and leant out, but she was disappointed: there was no late rose just out on the wall. It was hardly like roses anyway: what was it like? Was it violets? She thought it was violets, but there were no violets anywhere near! She went into her room, and took off her hat.

When Mary brought in her luncheon she told her of the queer scent upstairs in the corridor.

"Furniture polish, ma'am," said Mary, stolidly.

## CHAPTER VII

BRENT was away for two days. On the morning of the day he was to return Philippa received two letters, a short one from Michael, and a longer one from Dick. Michael's was soon read: it merely informed her that he would be back that evening, and asked her to give the order to George (the freckled youth) to drive out to fetch him.

She had finished breakfast and had been practising when the postman came. Now she hurried to Mary to give orders for dinner, before reading Dick's letter.

Then she went into the study with Rose, and sat down, and took Dick's letter from its envelope.

"DEAR PHILIPPA,—I have something to tell you that I believe and hope will be no end of a relief to you; you remember that horrible idea you'd got about its being the shock of finding about your being out with me that caused your father's death? I hate writing this, and will be as brief as I can, and then we will never mention it again. Well, you are *wrong*. Do believe it at last! Mrs. Harris was in a dead funk over the lies she'd told you. The truth appears to be that at a quarter past eight finding your father did not come out of his room for dinner, she knocked on his study door, and, receiving no answer, went in. He was lying back in his chair quite peacefully, and had been dead for some little time. This is the simple, plain truth, Philippa, she was much too scared to tell anything but the truth. You see your father did *not* know about your going out, so that horrible thought is killed at last. I can't tell you how glad I am to find this out, and tell you. I had to

write, instead of telling you in person, because I find I've got to stay here a bit to finish a picture that was commissioned for the spring, but is wanted now in a hurry. I hope I'll be down again soon. Don't talk about this when you see me. Try to forget all the horrid part of that night, and only remember that you and I—Auntie and nephew!—went to the play, and enjoyed it.—Yours very sincerely,

"DICK."

Philippa read it through quite quietly; only the pallor of her face showed that it was not an ordinary letter. Then she read it through again, and she put her head down on the table, and cried. Rose's cold nose thrust lovingly into her hand did not rouse her, but when she began to worry her skirt, Philippa lifted her head, and smiled.

She picked up the letter—wet and blotted now—and studied it earnestly. So Dick had done that! Without a word to her, he had gone to the house in Westminster, and had confronted Mrs. Harris, and found out the truth! She was shaken in a storm of passionate gratitude. And he did not want her to thank him! She smiled: well, she would not, except by letter! That she must do. She felt a curious sense of peace: that old nagging fear in the background had been slain once for all: she faced the world with no hidden terror: she thought of her father gently, no longer shrinking from such thought.

And Dick had done it. Dick had brought this deep thankfulness to her.

When Brent returned that evening he found a radiant Philippa waiting for him.

"You don't look as if you'd been scared—alone," he said.

She laughed softly.

"I've been happy! Oh, so happy."

He smiled.

"Master away, eh? I hope you haven't been trying on my hats, or smoking my pipes, Philippa."

"I've done both. Did you see Sir Henry about that ship?"

"Yes: he lent me the book I wanted. I'll show it to you, with an engraving of the ship that will be very useful to me."

"I hope you called on the Smiths?"

"I'm extremely sorry, but I really had not time."

He went into the study carrying a bag.

"Some books," he said, opening it.

"Anything nice?" she came and watched as he took them out.

"Architecture. A new anthology—what's that? Oh, a pair of gloves I bought——" he opened the parcel carelessly, and yards upon yards of light blue narrow ribbon unwound onto the table. Philippa stared.

"What's that for, Michael?"

"Mary," he said.

She began to laugh.

"I think it's horrid of you to suggest such a thing of Mary!"

He rolled the ribbon up clumsily and pushed it back into his bag. Philippa, who had recognized it as washing, underclothing ribbon, went on laughing.

"Mary!" she said. "Did they put it in by mistake, Michael?"

"No; I told you Mary asked me to get it for her."

"What an extraordinary thing!"

"I don't see anything extraordinary in it," he said shortly. "She likes it at a special shop, so asked me to get it for her."

Philippa had seen the name of a shop in Bond Street on the paper.

"Mary has unexpectedly frivolous tastes," she said drily.

"Possibly. No one is consistent."

He went out of the room and upstairs.

## CHAPTER VIII

When Anne's letter came a few weeks later Philippa was surprised at the tremendous sense of relief she experienced. She sat awhile with the letter in her hand looking out to the distant hills. Anne wanted to come and stay a few days. Philippa drew a long breath: it would be good to have Anne, it would be very good indeed. She realized, with a certain disquietude, the strain of these last weeks; with the enormous sense of relief came the elucidation of her own irritability, her impatience, her restlessness. Her mind leapt forward into the years to come: would it be like that always? There had been times when she and Brent had almost snapped at each other! Would they, in time, quarrel? She decided definitely against that: she could not imagine him quarrelling. Would she then descend to nagging? The horror of the thought sent her to her feet: she paced the room restlessly. Why did they seem to get on each other's nerves? There were times when they were good comrades. . . .

She paused; her face cleared. She told herself they would not continue to live in a solitude like this, it was only to last for a few weeks or so, until Michael should have finished his work. And she was safe from anyone's wooing! And Anne was coming! Her mood changed suddenly to one of joy. She ran downstairs to the study where Brent was writing.

"Michael, may I interrupt?"

He looked up from his papers and smiled.

"What is it, child?"

"It's Anne!"

"Is she going to be married?"

"Something much better than that——"

"Come here, Philippa."

She came and stood beside his chair: he took her hands into his, and looked up at her.

"Do you think that that is the right way to speak to your husband?" he said with mock gravity.

She wriggled her hands in his, but could not get away.

"You're not my husband, Michael!"

He did not move his eyes.

"Aren't I?" he said quietly.

"I—I *hate* being held! You're a bully!" she cried childishly.

He looked down at her wrists.

"I could snap them, I believe," he said.

"No, you couldn't. And I don't care. Anne has written——"

"She wrote to me too, some weeks ago. Anne is very angry indeed with me."

"What for?"

"For marrying you, she said. Oh, she told me some very unpleasant facts about myself."

"She wrote to me too about it. She was very sorry for me, she said. You see, she had an idea that—oh, you know what I mean——"

"She wanted you to marry for love. Was that it?"

"Yes."

He looked up at her.

"What are you blushing for, Philippa?"

"I'm not! How ridiculous you are! I—it's hot in here——"

He gave a sudden little laugh, and bending his head, kissed first one hand, then the other, and released them.

Philippa stood staring at him.

"How awfully silly!" she exclaimed angrily. "What on earth did you do that for, Michael? I don't like it a bit."

"No, but I did."

"What? I——"

"When a man has a young and pretty housekeeper he's always allowed to do that, Philippa, it's an old-fashioned sign of affectionate respect."

She eyed him uncertainly: he looked so cool and amused that she felt anger would be absurdly out of place.

"Well, please don't do it again. I hate that sort of silly rubbish," she said fiercely.

He bowed.

"And your news about Anne, my dear?"

Without knowing why, Philippa hated his calling her "my dear"; it always put her miles away, and made her feel she was quite childish and rather stupid.

"She's coming to stay here a few days!"

She forgot everything again but her joy. "Isn't it sweet of her? It's such a long, tiresome journey just for a few days! She can come at the end of the week. Aren't you glad, Michael?" she broke off. "You like Anne too."

He smiled.

"I've liked Anne for many years, but I'm afraid she won't be able to come——"

"Not come? What do you mean?"

"Well—er—I think that very possibly Dick will be down this week——"

"But what does that matter? They love each other. Oh, I shall love having them both together! Won't it be fun?"

He was looking down at his papers, frowning heavily: there was a little pause: she waited breathlessly, incredulous, yet afraid.

He lifted his head, and his cold blue eyes looked at her keenly.

"I'm afraid you will be disappointed, Philippa——"

"What? Disappointed about what?"

"I would rather not have Anne down here," he said.

She drew a long breath.

"Not have Anne! Not have her! But why? Have you quarrelled?"

"Anne and I have quarrelled and made it up again many a time," he said, smiling. "No, it's not that."

"What then?"

"I would prefer to have Anne's visit postponed until we go to Norfolk."

Philippa's face grew slowly red.

"You mean you won't let Anne come down here?"

"You have a crude way of putting it, but that is what I mean. I am sorry to disappoint you."

She stood a minute staring at him.

"Of course, I am only the housekeeper!" she said in a stifled voice.

"By your own wish," he replied.

She turned and left the room. Out in the hall Rose lay curled up on a rug, she moved her tail lazily as Philippa reappeared, then got up and followed her upstairs. Philippa hurried on her hat and coat, and went out. A thin drizzle of rain began to fall, blotting out sea and land: she walked on through it, the dejected lurcher at her heels. She was conscious of the need of thought, but could not think clearly: she was furiously angry with Brent, but more furious with herself, for having placed herself in a subservient position for life, where she was not even at liberty to invite a friend to stay with her. Her own fault—yes! She knew it was her own fault. She had wished, more, she had insisted, on strictly keeping to the *rôle* of housekeeper. She felt she was inconsistent, knew that she was not reasoning logically. And why be so angry with Michael? Did housekeepers, as a rule, allow themselves to be so upset over their masters' moods and whims as she allowed herself to be?

On through the mist she went, walking rapidly.

At last the thought formed.

"Was the position of wife-housekeeper an impossible one?"

Through the mist a figure loomed, a deep, gay voice rang out:

"Auntie! Here's a bit of luck!"

Philippa was conscious of a rush of happiness.

"Dick!"

He took both her hands in his, and shook them up and down. Philippa's wet face was lifted to his: he noticed the little glistening drops that clung to her lashes.

"Isn't this mist ripping?" he said. "I'm walking from the station. I've not done more than half the distance, have I? And now I've got you. Hulloa, yaller dog, don't scratch yourself on me."

"She's a darling, and as clean as you are."

"Am I a darling, too, Auntie?"

She laughed.

"Just a ducky, darling, 'ittle nephew, am I?"

"I think you make rather a nice nephew," she said demurely.

"That'll do, for the present. Soon, you must love me for myself. I've finished the picksher, Phil. I'm going to call you Phil, it suits you down to the ground. I say, I think it's rather nice of old Mike to go and present me with such a charming young aunt. We're going to be great friends—you and I, Phil, oh, great friends."

"You've been a great friend——"

" 'Gaily the troubadour twanged his guitar,' " sang Dick lustily. "Every time you start on that subject, I shall start on that song. I warn you. Your letter was more than enough——"

"Oh, but Dick, just let me say——"

" 'Gaily the troubadour——' "

She laughed and gave in.

"I've brought my painting tackle," he said. "It's so warm down here I hope I shall be able to do a bit of painting without getting frost-bitten. When did you get my wire?"

"There hasn't been a wire, at least there hadn't been one when I came out about two hours ago."

"Good Lord, what a place this is! I sent it off at 8.30

from Dawlington, in Devonshire, you know. What time did you start out?"

"About twelve."

"I spent the week end with the Hewittsons. Do you know them?"

"I've heard the name from Anne, I think."

He laughed.

"Didn't Anne tell you that Enid Hewittson and I were made for each other?"

"No."

"She always tells me so, and I tell her that I'd never have believed her capable of such maladroitness! If she'd kept silent, who knows?"

"What is she like?"

"Enid? Oh, a charming girl, fair and sweet and soft and much too inclined to spoil me. If you find me rather insufferable, you may box my ears; I believe I usually am rather awful after a visit there."

"She must be rather stupid," Philippa said.

His tone altered.

"She's anything but stupid. As a matter of fact, she's a very clever girl; she sings and plays beautifully; she could have made her fortune, they say, either in opera or at concerts, but I'm glad to say she is sufficiently womanly to shrink from publicity, and uses her talents only to please her friends."

"What a waste!"

"Think so? I don't agree with you at all."

Philippa smiled in the mist at the hint of boyish priggishness about him, but she said no more on the subject.

"Anne's coming down some time," he said presently. "I hope she manages it while I'm here."

"She's not coming," Philippa said bitterly.

"Eh? Why?"

"Michael won't have her."

"What? Why on earth not? Oh, I say, what fun, have they had a row?"

"No: he prefers her to postpone her visit until we go to his home in Norfolk."

"What's he mean by that?"

"What he says, I suppose."

"I say, Phil, tell me honest—am I in the way? I mean—honeymoon, I suppose, and all that, after all! I oughtn't to be here, I suppose, only somehow you and Mike——"

He paused uncomfortably.

"Yes, somehow Mike and I," she repeated. "That's quite right, Dick."

"What d'you mean?"

She hesitated.

"I think I'll be off again," he said. "I was a fool to come poking down——"

She turned and caught his arm.

"Don't go, Dick! No, don't go away! I want you to stay here!"

He walked on in silence, then said in a constrained voice:

"If it's—er—a quarrel I'd much sooner go back——"

"It isn't a quarrel! Housekeepers don't quarrel with their masters, Dick!"

"What? I don't think you ought to speak like that, Philippa; it's beastly bad form."

"What a pity you've imbibed some of Michael's priggishness," she rejoined.

"I'm afraid our family is altogether too respectable for your liking," he said.

She winced: she was surprised he should say that.

They walked on in silence till they came to a slippery difficult boulder, and he turned to help her.

"Sorry, Auntie!" he said frankly. "Let's make it up."

"It must have been my fault," she said contritely. "I'm quite sure you'd never be grumpy by yourself."

He laughed.

"No, mine the fault! Fact is, you hit me rather hard."

He looked at her seriously. "Sometimes I've a horrible fear that I *am* a bit of a prig. I don't want to be. I'd like to be rather a gay dog, you know, and all that——"

"I'm quite *sure* you're not a prig! Anything but that!"

"Honest?" He smiled relieved. "You know, sometimes, I have a vision of myself twenty years hence: rather fat, very sleek and prosperous looking, with two chins, very white hands, always in immaculate clothes, and taking round the plate at Church!"

She looked at him laughing; then paused astonished.

"You look almost as if—as if you half meant it!"

He gave her a curiously young, rueful glance.

"I believe I do—quite half!"

"You can't! It's exactly the opposite of you."

"Think so? That's all right then. Let's get on. I hope you've got something nice for lunch: I'm getting awfully hungry."

Presently she said:

"Dick?"

"Yes."

"Hasn't Michael told you how I—we—why we married each other?"

"That's usually understood, isn't it?"

"No, oh no! Not with us. I was going to marry someone else—an old man—to be his housekeeper, and when I told Michael he said he wanted a housekeeper, too, and asked me if he wouldn't do instead. That's how it was."

Dick did not say anything.

Philippa, aware that her explanation sounded bald and unconvincing, endeavoured to amplify it.

"It was very kind of him. He knew I'd have a better time as his housekeeper than with the Professor. Only I don't feel as if I work hard enough. Perhaps I shall when we go to his home, and I have servants to keep in order, and that sort of thing."

"Yes; you'll have a harder job then," Dick said absently. "How long are you going to stay down here?"

"I don't know. I think till he has finished his book."

"Has he sent for his horses yet?"

"No."

"Why doesn't he?"

"He says it's no country round here for riding."

"That's true, still I should have thought—however, it's not my job! But aren't you fearfully dull here?"

She hesitated.

"I don't think so. You see, I was born in Cornwall, and I'd got very homesick. I love it. It's rather lonely sometimes, but now you've come it will be all right."

"Will it?"

"We'll go for long walks. I'll show you some wonderful country. You shall come too, Rose, shan't you? You love dogs, don't you, Dick?"

"Rather!"

"I'm so glad. I don't think Michael cares for them much. Poor Rose is often banished to the stable."

"He has dogs in Norfolk."

"I know. What I call business dogs. I don't suppose I'd be allowed to frivol with them. What's the time?"

"A quarter to three."

"Oh, Dick! And lunch is at half-past one! I hope Michael won't be angry! I've always been in most punctually to meals."

"Well, if you've ordered it correctly, isn't that where your duty stops?" he said impatiently.

"Is it? I don't know. Let's hurry, anyhow."

As they went up the drive—grey and dripping and ghostly it looked—she saw Michael's face at one of the study windows. She entered the hall and looked doubtfully at the study door.

"I'll run up and take my things off," she said hurriedly. "Michael's in there."

She went first to the kitchen and gave some orders to

Mary, then went up to her room. A few minutes later someone knocked on her door. "Come in," she said, and Michael entered. She turned, the hair-brush in her hand, and looked at him surprised.

"I'm sorry I wasn't in to lunch," she said tentatively.

There was a little pause; she stared at him fascinated, and a curious terror stole over her.

"Is it such a heinous fault in a housekeeper?" she said lightly.

"I think it was your duty to let me know you were going to meet Dick," he said.

"Let you know—Didn't Dick tell you about the wire, and that it was just chance?"

"Yes; he told me that."

"Then—I don't know what you mean, Michael. What *do* you mean? You *know* I didn't know he was coming—Besides, he told you——"

"You thought it worth it—six miles in a driving mist—to meet him! A devoted aunt indeed!"

His words cut coldly across her confused complaining: she stood a moment staring at him, the hair-brush clutched in her hand.

"I wouldn't have refused my permission, if you'd told me," he said. "I'm not an unreasonable master——"

"Go out of my room!"

A curious light leapt to his cold eyes; he smiled.

"I haven't finished," he said.

"You're trying to insult me. I don't know what you want. You're accusing me of telling lies. If you don't leave my room at once, I'll—I'll call for someone to *put* you out!"

"Who? Dick?"

"Yes!"

He laughed.

"Try it, Philippa. I don't think Dick would succeed."

She was trembling: she ran at him.

"You *shall* go out!" She pushed him wildly. "He *could* put you out! He's bigger than you——"

"Well, *you* can't!" He seized her suddenly by her shoulders, and shook her. "You fool!" he muttered. "You fool!"

His hands dropped, and he turned and left the room.

Philippa sat down limply on the bed: her head was whirling, her throat dry, her heart was beating heavily. She could not think: she said over and over again: "I can't stay. I can't stay."

Dick's voice called to her:

"Philippa, lunch is waiting, and I'm ravenous. Aren't you coming?"

She opened her dry lips, but no sound came from them.

He pounded on the door.

"Come along, Phil. Aren't you ready?"

"You begin, Dick. I won't be a minute."

"Hurry up, then."

She heard his footsteps go down the stairs, his charming voice singing, heard him address Rose; then there was silence.

Michael had shaken her! She had seen a horrible fierce light in his eyes—she shivered. Anne's voice sounded in her ears: "I think he has a cruel mouth."

It had been cruel just now: she remembered it, a thin pale line. . . . And he had insulted her. Why? What did he mean about her going to meet Dick? Why should she do such an absurd thing? Why hide the fact of his coming if she had known it? Had Michael gone mad? What had he said to Dick? What did it all mean?

She heard a sound, and rushed, trembling, to the door, and locked it. She was afraid.

Why had she ignored Anne's words? Wise Anne, who knew everything! The Professor had been safer, after all!

"Philippa! I shall finish up the salad if you don't come down!" Dick's voice shouting up the stairs.

Pride suddenly leapt to her assistance: she opened the door and called down gaily: "Leave me a little! I'm just coming!"

She went to the mirror, and met her reflection, white, wide-eyed, scared. She rubbed her cheeks, wetted her lips and smiled. He should never know she was afraid of him! She would go down, and later she would tell him that she was going by the next morning's train to London. As she left her room she trembled with excitement and the strain of rushing thought, but she went down and joined Dick in the dining-room.

"Unsociable aunt," he abjured her. "I do hate feeding alone. Chicken? That old ghost-jailer does make decent salads; a minute more, and it would have vanished forever."

"Why has she laid a third place?"

"Don't know, unless she thought Mike would like another lunch. I say, Phil, I don't believe he's a bit pleased to see me. I feel rather a fool. I think I'd better have an urgent wire to-morrow morning—no—that won't do, a wire's an event here. I'd better remember an important financial engagement, and do a bunk."

She tried to tell him she was going away herself, but could not get it out.

"Why aren't you eating anything? Feel seedy?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"What did he say to you?"

"Oh, he sort of looked at me, and stuck his eyebrows up, and made me feel rather like a naughty little schoolboy, while I blurted out about the wire and so forth. It's just arrived, by the way. Are you eating that chicken?"

"Yes."

"I don't want to go. I want to paint your portrait in that frock you wore one night—that sort of silvery white shining thing. I should love to paint you. Wish there was a top light here. May I paint you, Phil?"

"Some day."

"Did you see that thing of mine this year in the Academy? The girl in the lilac frock?"

"It was beautiful."

"That was a model. A silly fool of a chap—Lester—has married her."

"She is very lovely."

"Oh yes, she's lovely enough."

She looked across at him interestedly.

"Would you ever do that?"

"What? Marry a model, or a chorus girl, or that sort of thing? Rather not! It doesn't attract me in the least."

She smiled provokingly.

"You probably will then."

"Not I," he said serenely.

She propped her chin on her hands, and studied him gravely.

"I prophesy that you'll do something of the sort—I mean that you won't make an ordinary, conventional, respectable marriage."

"I shan't marry a chorus girl," he said imperturbably.

"Then you'll marry a divorced woman, or something like that!"

He frowned.

"You shouldn't say that sort of thing!" he said quickly.

"I'm sorry."

He smiled.

"You made me feel sort of creepy, Phil, I don't know why. But it's not a likely contingency—I'm not particularly partial to married ladies. I think as a rule I like a nice, jolly, friendly girl better."

"Aren't you very old-fashioned? Can't a girl be nice and jolly and friendly even if she is married?"

"Of course she can, but not to the same extent. A husband——"

"Was that the hall door?"

"No. It's old jailer Mary come out of the kitchen. I bet she's off on a prowl in that closed wing. Shall I follow her?"

"I don't think you will gain much."

"Ghosts been lively lately? Seen looney-Billy?"

She shook her head.

"All quite quiet and well-behaved."

"What does she light fires in there for?"

"It's very damp; that wall gets all the rain from the west, you see."

"Oh, of course, didn't someone tell us that William suffered from rheumatism?"

She gave a little shiver.

"Poor William!"

She rose restlessly.

"Are you going?" he said aggrieved. "I feel so comfy and lazy. Stay with me."

She looked down into his coaxing blue eyes, and a lump came into her throat. She felt a sudden uncharacteristic longing to pour out her troubles to him. He stretched out his arm and caught her wrist, pulling her gently towards him.

"Come and sit down again, there's a kind little Auntie," he said caressingly.

She sat down in the chair beside him, her eyes full of tears.

"That's better," he said gently, and fell silent.

The room darkened: beyond the windows rain fell straight and heavy: they could hear the sea booming on the rocks.

"I'm going away to-morrow morning," she said in a miserable voice.

"Are you? Where?"

"London, I think."

"We'll go together then. I can take care of you. Going to stay with Anne a bit?"

She looked at his face smiling at her kindly: he had no idea of what she meant.

"I—I don't know what I shall do. I—may not come back here."

"Well, I don't blame you, I must say. You make old Mike get along to his own place. You'll like that much better than this dreary hole."

"I love Cornwall!" she said quickly, jealously.

He laughed.

"Of course you do. But that doesn't necessarily include a love of an old, damp, God-forsaken, ghost-ridden place like this, does it?"

"Yes, in a way."

"You're very thorough."

"That's Mary taking tea into the hall.

"Good Lord, I've hardly finished my lunch!"

"I'm thirsty."

She rose, and he rose too: at the door he paused and looked back into the dusky room.

"That was a nice little cosy lunch somehow," he said.

Philippa did not reply: she went into the hall, and stood by the great open fire-place, looking down into the fire.

"Shall I bring the lamp, ma'am?" said Mary's voice.

"No, Mary, the firelight will do."

She feared Michael's gaze, and, despising herself for cowardice, she turned and went across to the study. She found it empty, and came back slowly to the tea-table.

"Michael is out, I think," she said to Dick.

Dick, sunk into a comfortable chair, shivered luxuriously.

"Out in that rain, when he might be here. This isn't a bad hall, Phil, is it?"

"Oh no, charming. Is it two lumps?"

"Are they little ones? Three then, please."

A few minutes later a step sounded outside; there were movements in the porch.

"It's Michael taking off his oilies," Philippa said in a constrained voice.

The door opened and Michael came into the hall.

"Hulloa, rather wet outside, isn't it?" Dick said.

"It's raining heavily."

He stood a moment by the door, then came across to the fire, and stood looking down at Philippa.

She poured out a cup of tea, and suddenly she queried jerkily: "Sugar, Michael?"

There was a little pause.

"No, thank you," he said.

And Dick burst out laughing.

"Not found out that yet, Philippa?"

Philippa, scarlet, had no answer.

"It's a joke of ours," Michael said calmly.

"Oh, I see. I thought it was rather too absent-minded," Dick laughed. "I say, Mike, I'm afraid I've been an awful fool. I'm afraid I shall have to be off again to-morrow morning. Business about a commission—rather an important commission—I was a fool to forget about it."

"Pity; it's such a long journey. You must come down again."

"Thanks. I will. That's if I can get away. I suppose you won't be here much longer yourself, will you?"

"No: a week perhaps, or less."

Philippa lifted her head.

"Well, I shan't be down again then," Dick said. "I'll look you up in Norfolk instead. You'll go there, I suppose?"

"I don't know. I may decide to go abroad. I haven't made up my mind."

"Which would you like to do, Phil?" Dick said warmly.

"Oh, I—I haven't any plans yet," she answered nervously.

Michael rose and put down his cup.

"I want to get through some writing," he said.

He crossed the hall to his study, opened the door and went in.

## CHAPTER IX

THE tall old grandfather's clock struck six times. Philippa half rose, then sat down again, looking at the closed study door. For three-quarters of an hour she had been trying to make herself go in and tell Michael that she was going away the next morning.

From above came the sound of Dick's voice singing; the sound of hammering: he was up in an attic, doing something to his easel; she thought he had said his easel.

"Shall I take away the tea-things, ma'am?"

Philippa started nervously.

"Oh yes, Mary."

She rose and stood looking down into the fire: it seemed queer to think that by that time to-morrow she would have left this all behind forever. . . .

"Did Mr. Brent have his lunch out, ma'am?"

"Was he out at lunch time?"

"No, ma'am, but he didn't have it before you came in, and he hasn't had any since."

"Probably he did have something somewhere."

She moved towards the study door, then paused nervously, and stood watching Mary gather up cups and saucers.

"Do you live here by yourself when the house isn't let, Mary?" she said idly.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Aren't you nervous here all alone?"

"No, ma'am."

"Aren't you afraid you might see poor William?"

"That's what I belong to stay here for, ma'am."

"What? To see him?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Mary walked imperturbably from the room, carrying the tea-tray.

Philippa gave a little shiver, and opened the door of the study: to her surprise she found the room in darkness.

"Aren't you in here, Michael?"

"Yes."

She closed the door and came across to the hearth-rug: she picked up the poker, and attacked the sullen fire.

"It was almost out," she said.

"I forgot it."

She put the poker down, and faced him: he rose and stood resting his shoulder against the mantelshelf.

"I came to tell you that I am going away, Michael, to-morrow morning."

"Very well," he said quietly.

There was a silence.

"You'll go with Dick?" he said.

"Yes."

There was another silence.

"I—mean for—ever, Michael."

"So I understood."

She turned away, and began to move slowly towards the door: his voice arrested her.

"I'm sorry I was such a brute to-day, Philippa."

Astonishment held her breathless for a moment.

"It's entirely my fault that the—er—experiment has failed," he went on wearily. "I think you know that, but I'd like to make sure. I want to have a talk with you, but not now, I think. Later, perhaps."

She stood at the foot of the little flight of steps, looking at him uncertainly. He was standing staring down into the fire: she thought he looked tired, and somehow dejected.

"What made you—what made you say those queer things, Michael?" she asked timidly.

He did not raise his head.

"When you didn't come in I got an idea you'd gone off, because of that Anne business," he said.

"Yes?"

"Well, when I found out that you'd only been for a walk I was fool enough to lose my temper."

"But I don't understand——"

"I don't suppose you do," he interrupted impatiently. "Anyhow I'd no right to do it."

His tone made her take a step towards the staircase, but she paused again, vaguely dissatisfied, uncertain of what she wanted.

He lifted his head and looked at her.

"When you live away from me, do you mean to call yourself by my name?"

She was startled.

"I—I hadn't thought about it, but I suppose so. My name *is* Mrs. Brent now——"

"People will talk, won't they?"

"I can't help it."

He turned back to the fire.

"I've mucked it all with my brute of a temper!" she heard him mutter.

All that was warm and generous in her responded to his tone: there was nothing petty about Philippa. She slipped back to him, and touched his hand gently.

"I won't go, Michael, if you'd rather I didn't," she said.

He did not move or answer.

"Which is it to be, Michael?" she asked.

He turned and looked down sombrely into her face: he put his hands on her shoulders, and drawing her closer, gazed down frowningly into her clear young eyes.

"Oh, child, I don't know!" he groaned, and dropping his hands, turned from her, and began to walk up and down the room.

She watched him uncertainly.

"We—haven't got on so badly altogether, have we?" she said tentatively. "And in your own house I should have more to do, and be better tempered——"

"I shan't be better-tempered," he interrupted harshly. "Don't get thinking that!"

"Oh, well, perhaps I shall get used to it!"

"Doubt—that's what it is! I've always been sure before. Remember that fool of a man in the play we went to with Anne, Philippa? Well, I think I'm rather like him, after all!"

"You? How, Michael?"

He walked the length of the room without answering; then came and stood before her.

"Suppose I've ruined your life, child?"

She lifted startled eyes.

"But you haven't! How? Oh, you mean—that! What a terribly sensitive conscience you have, Michael."

He gave a little sudden laugh.

"Have I? Well, let it go then! Stay, Philippa, and let's see if we can't hit it off better, eh?"

She nodded.

He held out his hand; she put hers into it.

"How cold you are!" she said. "Michael, where did you have lunch, and why didn't you have it at the proper time?"

"Perhaps because I was worried about your possible absconding."

She laughed.

"I don't think I'm as valuable as all that."

"I don't know, you're a very good housekeeper, on the whole."

She made him a curtsey.

"I hope you'll put that in my reference for my next place," she said.

"You forget there can't be a next place unless I die!" His voice was harsh, peremptory, and it startled her.

"There can! That was the agreement. If it doesn't answer, we can part."

"Can we?" he said grimly. "I'm not so sure, young lady. I've got you, and I rather think I'm going to keep you now. So get that into your pretty head, will you?"

"I believe that's the first compliment you have ever paid me," she said rather nervously.

"Oh, do you want that sort of thing, Philippa?" He came closer. "I can give you plenty——"

She backed from him, laughing.

"Don't be stupid, Michael! You know I don't. I hate that sort of rubbish. *Where did you have lunch?* Now answer!"

"I didn't have any. I forgot all about it."

"And you ate nothing at tea! You must be starving."

"I believe I am, now you mention it."

He dropped into his chair. "I feel rather beat to the world, Philippa," he said in a tired voice.

"You're starving and cold and done-up. You wait a minute, Michael."

She ran to the door.

"Are you going?" he said.

"I'll be back in a minute."

She came back presently carrying a tray.

"Mind those steps," he exclaimed, going to meet her.

"You fetch the bottle of claret in the hall. I'm all right," she said.

She put the tray down on a small round table, and wheeled it up to the fire.

"Now sit down and eat," she said.

He sat down.

"Are you going to feed me?"

"Almost. I'm going to direct operations. You're to eat that chicken and ham—all of it, mind. Now begin."

"How about my dinner?" he asked, as he obeyed.

"It's not quite half-past six, and dinner isn't until eight. That's just like a man."

"I was only wondering if you'd expect me to eat a big dinner as well," he said meekly.

"You can do what you like about dinner; I take no interest in it. The present meal is all my concern."

"You eat too," he said.

She shook her head.

"Why should I?"

"Because I want you to."

"I do feel hungry," she confessed. "I didn't eat much lunch."

"Why?"

"You needn't frown at me like that. I'm not a bit afraid of you at the present minute."

He gave a sardonic little laugh.

"And they talk of a woman's instinct!" he muttered.

"What? Why? You're *not* cross now, are you? You don't feel angry with me, do you?"

"No, I don't feel angry with you. Now, shall I ring for knives and things for you?"

"No: I can manage. Here's a small knife, and a fork I put in in case you wanted some of that jelly, and a plate."

She pulled her chair up to the table, and he helped her to some chicken.

Presently she paused.

"You're not eating anything, Michael!"

He pushed back his chair.

"I don't want any more, Philippa. You eat."

"But you've hardly eaten anything!"

"Yes, I have."

She sat back disappointedly.

"I don't want any more," she said.

"Yes, you do. Eat a little more, there's a good child."

She looked up at him and smiled.

"You come and eat too," she said coaxingly. "Then I will."

He turned away abruptly.

"I don't want to spoil my dinner!" he said curtly.

She ate a few mouthfuls in silence, then rose.

"I did think you would like my little tray, Michael," she said, with childish disappointment.

"So I did: it was most kind and thoughtful of you. Have you finished?" He pulled the bell sharply.

She stood silent while Mary came in and fetched away the tray. Then she said:

"You told Dick you were going to leave here soon——"

"I'm not now."

"Why did you say you were?"

"I thought you'd be going. I want to do a little writing now, Philippa."

"But my going needn't have affected your arrangements," she argued.

"No?"

She moved slowly towards the door.

"You're dreadfully disappointing," she said.

"Thanks for the delightful little meal."

In the hall Mary came to her with a telegram from Anne, regretting that she had found it would be impossible for her to get away from London for the present.

## CHAPTER X

Dick did not leave the next morning: Michael, avowing a change of plans on his own part, persuaded him to stay. Dick stayed and began a portrait of Philippa. He was not at all an arbitrary or absorbed painter; he was fond of talking while he worked, and it was perhaps these sittings more than anything else that went to make the friendship that grew between them. Brent they saw little of in these days; he spent a good deal of his time in the study, writing. But one day Dick fetched him to give his opinion on the portrait. He came and stood before the easel in silence, looking from the canvas to Philippa and back again.

"Of course it's a wretched light!" Dick found himself explaining.

"I think it's delightful!" Philippa said from her chair. "Much too nice for me!"

"Yes, it is," Brent said. "Much too pretty."

Philippa laughed.

"Oh, how horrid you are, Michael! Dick's much nicer, he declares it isn't a bit prettier than I am."

"It's not," Dick said. "I can't quite get what I want. What do you think of it, Uncle Mike?"

"It's a fine bit of painting," Brent said. "That scarf is wonderful, I think——"

"Really? I'm so glad. I rather like that myself. And that hand—I took a fearful time over that."

Brent nodded.

"Splendid."

"But you don't think it's like her? Where is it, d'you think?"

"Isn't it because you've given her such a—a sort of happy, laughing, careless look?"

"But that's how she does look when she's sitting. You mean she's more thoughtful?"

Philippa rose and came and studied the portrait.

"Isn't the painting exquisite?" she said.

"I don't see her like that," Brent said. "But perhaps you're right—she has had that look more lately."

He continued to study the portrait.

"What I always try to get is the *character* of a sitter," Dick said earnestly. "I've got her sort of half smiling, half serious. I think it's all right. I've put all I know into it."

"I shouldn't have thought Philippa had the character of a chocolate-box-lid young lady," Brent said, and went out of the room.

Dick stared ruefully at the canvas.

"That was a nasty one!"

"It's a libel," Philippa said. "I can't think what made him say such a nasty thing."

"I don't think it is like that, you know. Go and sit, will you, and let me have another look?"

Philippa took up her position.

"Head a little more to the left—too much—that's right. Thanks."

He backed from the easel, studying the painting and her.

"You don't look a bit like it now!" he exclaimed. "You're never the same two hours together. I've never had such a difficult model before. Don't *frown,* Phil!"

"Michael made me feel cross, I'm afraid."

"Then don't think of him. Think of something nice. Think of next spring—we'll go down to Anne's cottage in primrose time—you and I—that's better. Go on looking like that. We'll make Anne play to us in the evenings, and the room will be full of primroses. Funny thing, I've never met you at Anne's. Of course I was abroad. I adore

Anne, don't you? I think I admire her more than any woman I know. She sort of bucks you up if you're down about your painting, or anything of that sort. Don't look sad, Phil! What's wrong now?"

"I want Anne."

"Well, you can't have her."

"You don't know what Anne has been to me. No one knows. I used to wish something would happen so that I could make some big sacrifice for her; the sort of thing that happens in books——"

"Fall in love with the same man, and you throw him over for her, eh?"

"Oh, no, something much bigger than that. Save her life——"

"Well, perhaps that might. She might be dying for love of him."

"You're silly."

He stepped back from his easel, and put his palette down on a table.

"I believe you're like what's-her-name, the lady without a soul, Phil."

"I thought an artist had to study anatomy. Aren't you mixing soul with heart?"

"That's what you do when you fall in love anyway."

"Sentimental Dicky."

"Well, you're not sentimental." He looked at her curiously. "I don't believe you've got a heart either."

"What do you think I love Anne with? What is my friendship with you made of? I've no patience with the way people talk as if a heart's only used for a love affair!"

He laughed.

"Anne spoke of you to me once months ago," he said. "She thought we were going to meet, and she told me I wasn't to fall in love with you."

"That's not like Anne," Philippa said frowning.

"No; it isn't. I think she regretted it when she'd said it. I made quite a different picture of you from what she said."

"What did she say?"

"I don't think I'll tell you."

"Oh, do!"

"Shall I?"

"Yes."

"Well, she said—'She's not the sort you usually like, but I've an uneasy premonition that you both might fall in love, and it wouldn't do, Dick. If you feel that way to-night, you'll have to avoid her. It wouldn't do.' "

There was silence in the large attic: over Philippa's face the slow colour crept. She sat quite still, keeping her pose. Dick picked up his palette, and squeezed out some paint.

"I think it was fearfully unlike Anne to say a silly thing like that," Philippa said drily.

"Yes, it was, wasn't it?" Dick spoke hurriedly. "Rot, of course. She must have had an awfully strong feeling about it. Funny thing. These clever women get queer ideas into their heads sometimes. I suppose if they didn't they'd be too clever to be human."

There was silence again when he paused: he went on painting.

"Why was she so afraid of your doing it?" Philippa said calmly.

"Eh? Oh, I don't know. Head a *little* more to the left. Money, I suppose. I've only got what I make, you know, and the rent of the poor old place in Somersetshire. Pretty poor sort of look-out, isn't it?"

"Oh, I don't know. You've got on wonderfully well; you're so young."

"I suppose I have. But it's not much of a prospect, unless some millionaire or ex-convict wants me to paint his portrait. That would make me, all right."

After a while he added:

"A chap likes to feel that if he wanted to marry a girl without a penny, he'd be able to do it, and make her happy."

"You told me you sold two pictures for sixty guineas

each, and one for fifty, and had promised to paint a portrait for fifty, and another for forty-five—all in this year?"

He laughed.

"Better than that. I'm nearly sure of Lady Hardover! And that'll mean a hundred guineas, and, I hope, more commissions. She'll be lovely to paint. She's very pink and white and gold, and she's got most wonderful lace. I'll make her just a soft beautiful thing that you'd like to stroke."

"Is that the type you admire?"

"Yes, more or less. There's something so decorative about them: they look so charming in beautiful rooms. I always think they must be restful to live with, even if they're bad-tempered—just to look at 'em rests me."

Philippa looked wistful: it was the type she had admired in hansoms and taxis.

"I wish I were that type," she said childishly.

"Don't wish that, Phil! You're better than that," he burst out quickly. "They may rest one! You'd inspire a man! Or send him to hell!"

She got up, startled.

"Oh, Dick, what a funny thing to say!"

"Well, you would," he said doggedly. "I mean, of course, the man you loved."

"Oh—that!" she said impatiently. "One would think a woman can be nothing, do nothing, without that creeping in!"

"They can't—much!"

"How absurd you are, Dick! Where have you gone back to? Even then—in history——"

"Spare me Joan of Arc!" he exclaimed petulantly. "Mike is right! The thing's a simpering doll!"

He flung palette and brushes down, and turned away from the canvas.

"You all seem very anxious to make me a tragedy queen! *I* like the portrait."

"Please don't mention the thing for a bit. I'm going out."

Philippa, left alone, stood studying the portrait: then she went across to an old mirror on the table and looked at herself in that. Slowly a little smile parted her lips: she turned as she heard steps coming to the door.

"Look at me, Dick, I *am* a gay butterfly, and not—oh, it's you, Michael."

He stopped just inside the door: there was a little silence.

"Do you want me?" she said nervously.

"Yes, if you can give me a little while."

"Oh, of course."

He moved into the room, and stood before the painting.

"Don't you think it *is* like me?" she coaxed.

"It's not the face you show me," he said slowly.

"What do I show you?"

"I'm neither painter nor poet, so cannot tell you," he replied.

"That sounds rather pretty," she said.

He did not heed her: he was staring at the portrait: he turned away at last with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Pooh, it's as much like you as a pretty little steam yacht's like a racing cutter!" he said.

"I'll just slip into another frock, and come to you!" she called after him, as he left the room.

But when she joined him in the study he seemed to have nothing for her to do.

"What? Work? Oh yes—let me see—Why didn't you go out with Dick?"

"I don't know. I don't think he wanted me. He went off in a hurry."

He lit a cigarette. "Quarrel?" he said carelessly.

"Oh no. Dick and I never quarrel."

"You leave that for me, eh?"

She looked at him gravely.

"We—we've got on better lately, haven't we, Michael?"

He gave her a curious look.

"You feel happier, do you?" he said.

"Yes," she answered simply.

He smoked in silence.

"You don't regret anything?" he said.

"That I've stayed on?"

"No: before that. Your marriage."

"Oh, no—n-no."

He studied her face beneath frowning brows.

"What does that mean?" he said quietly.

She gave him a quick little nervous smile. "What?"

"That's unworthy of you, Philippa!" His tone was angry. "You know what I mean."

She tilted her chin defiantly.

"Perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't want to answer!" she said.

He turned away to the table, and picked up some papers.

"As you like," he said indifferently.

She watched him in silence for a while.

"Michael?"

"Yes?"

"You're very old for your age, aren't you?"

"Am I?"

She nodded.

"*So* staid! *So* stolid! *So* grave! *So* solemn! O-o-h, what an old, ancient, aged old Michael it is."

She was sitting on the arm of a chair swaying to and fro; her eyes mocked him.

"You're in very high spirits this morning," he said.

She nodded.

"Aren't you ever in high spirits, Michael? Were you ever gay in your far-away youth?"

"Some good people will tell you that I was too gay."

"Doesn't it seem funny? I wish you had a little of it left now."

He lifted his head and looked at her.

"Do you?" he said. "Do you, Philippa?"

"Yes. It would make life more exciting, wouldn't it?

As it is, I might almost as well have been the Professor's housekeeper."

He said nothing: he bent over his papers again.

Philippa, her lips curved in a mischievous smile, slipped from her chair, and round the table to his side.

"I think you work too hard, Michael! I'm going to take those papers away from you!"

She put out her hand, and hesitated.

He turned and looked into her face.

"Are you?" he said.

She gave a little excited laugh: her eyes were brilliant with delight at her own daring; a frightened colour swept into her cheeks.

"Yes!" she said, and snatched the papers from the table.

The next instant his arms were round her: she felt herself, fighting, crushed against him, his lips against her madly averted cheek. . . .

She stood trembling, her eyes, flaming with fury, sought for some weapon. In that moment, had a knife been handy, she might have tried to kill him. Words came from her trembling lips incoherently. Brent stood by the mantelshelf looking at her: his face was white, his eyes steely beneath his frowning brows.

"I'm sorry. You brought it on yourself," he said quietly.

The words startled her; his voice brought back something of the old everyday atmosphere: it bewildered her: a painful rush of tears nearly choked her.

"Insulting me—like a cad—a brute——," the words dropped from her, quivering with repulsion.

"You're my wife," he said doggedly.

Her words were arrested: she stopped and stared at him, suddenly rigid.

He passed his hand over his eyes, and his mouth widened a little in a grim smile.

"Are you finding I'm not quite so old as you thought?" he said harshly. "Does it make life more exciting?"

She gave a queer little cry.

"Have you gone mad?"

She turned to leave the room, but he stepped in front of her.

"What are you going to do, Philippa?"

"Let me pass. I'm going away, of course."

"No, you're not," he said quietly.

She stood, her head up, her face maddening in its scorn.

"Are you going to stop me?"

"Yes."

"How? Shall you shut me up in the haunted wing?" She seemed to throw her words at him, as if they were sharp pellets, but they did not hit him noticeably.

"I would do it, if necessary," he said.

"Shall you invoke the aid of the law? Let me pass. Can't you see what a ludicrous picture you're making, Michael? You've no power over me, except brute power. I've found out that you don't disdain using that, but if you were to do it again I would kill you. I think I could kill you with my bare hands another time. I feel as if I could!"

She held out her clenched hands; she was curiously like her mother at that moment, so white and tragic she looked.

But Michael's face relaxed suddenly in a smile; he had glanced at those inadequate, tragically-displayed hands.

"Philippa," he said gently. "I'm very sorry. Try to forgive me. Try, child. Sit down in that chair, and think it over. I won't come near you."

A little cruel smile played round her mouth.

"How can I know you won't?"

"I promise you."

"You promised—it was an understood promise—that you would respect me always as your housekeeper."

He was silent.

"I will never forgive you. Let me pass, Michael."

"I've told you you've got to stay here and think it over."

The hall door opened, a flutey whistle rang through the house.

With a little glad cry she sprang forward.

"It's Dick! Dick!" she called.

Brent caught her wrist, and held her.

"Do you *want* him interfering between husband and wife?" he said in a low, grim voice.

"We're employer and employed! Yes, I want him to help me."

He dropped her arm.

"Then go to him," he said, and turned back into the room.

Philippa ran up the stairs, and out into the hall.

Dick was standing in front of the fire, poking the lurcher with his foot: he turned as Philippa came out of the study.

"She's a good girl; she coursed two rabbits splendidly, and got 'em—what's the matter, Phil? Don't you feel well?"

"No——" said Philippa, and burst into tears.

"Oh, I say—let me get something—sit down——"

But Philippa was up the stairs, and had disappeared into her own room.

## CHAPTER XI

An hour later she came down to luncheon, a prayer in her heart that Michael would be decent enough not to appear. But Brent came in as usual, asking Dick some question as he entered the room. Throughout the meal he talked a good deal: it was Dick who was silent. Philippa tried to behave and look as usual, conscious chiefly of a wild desire not to have Dick guess what had happened.

After lunch Brent went into his study, leaving them in the hall.

"Feel better, Phil?" Dick asked, a curious shy look on his boyish face.

She nodded.

"Oh, I'm all right."

He studied her furtively.

"I've got a box of chocolates upstairs," he said, his eyes brightening. "I'll go and fetch them."

She watched him leaping up the stairs, and the tears came into her eyes.

"What an idiot I'm growing into!" she thought.

"Mary," she said as the woman came into the hall from the dining-room, "don't ghosts hate a cheerful person?"

Mary considered.

"Maybe they do, maybe they don't. Ghosts are just as different to each other as we belong to be, ma'am."

Philippa stared at her fascinated.

"Mary, do tell me if you've ever seen a ghost," she coaxed.

She had asked before, but had invariably been met with, "That's as may be, ma'am," and a grave finality. Now Mary replied:

"What for do you want to know, ma'am?"

Philippa, hoping, replied seriously:

"I'm interested."

"Well, it's like this, ma'am, I've lived here as you might say since I was born, and before that my mother was here, one way and another, and before her again my grandfather, you understand, and they do tell as how one night—a stormy night in December it was, and the wind from the west with rain to it, beating against the windows, and him sitting quiet like in the kitchen, and suddenly there come a noise—a sort of a soft rustling noise it was——"

"Fuller's forever!" chanted Dick's voice. "All done up in the pitty pinkie wibbons——"

"Oh, do be quiet, Dick! You've spoilt it. Mary, do go on."

But Mary walked towards the kitchen, her long back very stiff.

"That's all there is to it, ma'am," she said.

"Did I interrupt a ghost story?" cried Dick. "Cruel fate! Out upon thee, base chocolates of Fuller! Out upon thee, I say! Or stay, a thought! Could I perchance tempt the lady's tongue? A succulent strawberry cream? Or perchance a round one of the most excellent flavour of coffee?"

"Try her," Philippa said.

Mary, re-emerging, went her way towards the dining-room: Dick barred her progress with a deep bow.

"Can I persuade you to take a chocolate, Mary?"

To their surprise Mary halted, her eyes upon the dainty rows of chocolates.

"Do take one, Mary."

"Thank you, sir," Mary extracted a strawberry cream, and put it in her mouth. "Eating money!" she said, shaking her head, and she smiled. Dick let her go, so surprised was he.

"A vulnerable spot in the impeccable Mary of the Stolidity!" he ejaculated.

"That it should be chocolates!" cried Philippa. "I

see possibilities. Let's go and tempt ghosts out of her with chocolates."

"Done!"

They hurried into the dining-room, laughing.

"Another chocolate, Mary," cried Philippa. "Sit down, and eat them, and tell us the end of that story!"

Mary continued to brush crumbs from the tablecloth, but she accepted another chocolate, and she said:

"You'd only be laughing at me, you and the young gentleman."

"Oh no, Mary, we wouldn't laugh for the world!" Dick declared. "Ghosts are much too serious a matter for laughter."

"Do tell us, Mary," Philippa coaxed. She was standing, resting her arms on the high back of a chair; she was keeping thought at bay, and the effort lent her eyes a curious depth and brilliancy.

"Well," Mary said hesitatingly, the crumb brush poised. A step sounded in the hall: Mary's brush swept imaginary crumbs into the tray. Philippa turned away to the window.

"Old Mike," Dick said vaguely.

"Philippa, can you give me a little while in the study?"

She was taken completely by surprise: for a moment she stood staring out of the window, while the hot colour slowly left her cheeks.

"Yes," she said, and turned to follow him from the room.

He held the study door for her, then closing it walked briskly to the table, and picked up a bundle of papers.

"I've lost a paper on rigging," he said. "Some notes I wrote a few months ago. I wish you'd just look through this bundle for me. I want to get on with the chapter I'm doing."

He pushed the papers across to her. Philippa stood staring down at them.

"Sit down," he said impatiently. "If it's not amongst those——"

"I don't wish to do any more work for you, Michael."

He looked up at her from beneath bent brows.

"If you wouldn't mind just doing this. I've promised to let Sir Henry see this chapter as soon as possible."

She met his eyes: she tried to tell him that she did not choose to stay there with him alone, and the words remained, choking, in her throat. She sat down, feeling irrationally that the unuttered words were an insult to him. This feeling added to her sense of bewilderment. She went through the bundle of papers, laying each one carefully aside, one on top of the other, and when she came to the last she realized that she had not absorbed the meaning of any one of them.

"Isn't it there?" Brent asked, looking up from his writing.

The colour flew to her cheeks.

"I'll look again," she said hurriedly.

She went through the packet again.

"No," she said, "there are no notes about any rigging here."

She rose.

"Nuisance!" he muttered.

She went towards the door.

"If you can spare the time I wish you'd just see if it's amongst the papers in this left-hand drawer," he said.

She hesitated, then came back to the bureau, and sat down.

"Thank you," he said, and went on with his writing.

She opened the drawer, and began to go through the contents: she was conscious of an annoying sense of unreality, as if she were taking part in some play. Brent had become so unreal to her that her feeling of nausea towards him was momentarily deadened. She was aware of his every movement, experiencing a certain amount of curiosity as to what he would do next. But with this sense of unreality upon her, she found it impossible to make the effort of concentration necessary to the formation of any decision as to what she herself would do or say next. She studied

each paper carefully: it took a long while: the drawer was crowded with all sorts of papers and pamphlets, bills and old letters. When she was nearing the end of her task she was startled out of her apathy: she took up a sheet of foolscap, and her eyes fell on a sheet of notepaper beneath it with a date at the top of a few days since, and the beginning of a business letter, "Dear Sir" crossed through. Beneath it, written across the sheet were the words, "I love you, Priscilla. I adore you." For a moment she stared involuntarily, then she hastily shuffled the papers together, striving honestly to banish from her mind the words she had seen. But they seemed written across her brain—"I love you, Priscilla. I adore you——" There they flashed, in Brent's small, clear handwriting. As unlike him—confusingly unlike him—as his conduct to her that morning had been. "They always do if they've been that sort themselves." The words started up in her mind linking themselves to those others—"I love you, Priscilla. I adore you." They linked themselves firmly, flashing bewilderingly across her brain: she felt confused, conscious of a nervous shrinking: she turned from this revelation of an undreamt-of silliness in Brent's nature. She strove not to think of it, but she went on stigmatizing what she had seen as "silly."

Brent stretched out his hand, and took the top papers from the pile she had made on the bureau.

"It's—it's not there!" she said hurriedly, her face red.

"Something is," he said quietly.

She made an impulsive movement to snatch the papers from him: she was actuated by a generous instinctive wish to save him from the knowledge that his silliness had been laid bare to her. He drew back a little, and held up the sheet of notepaper.

"Is this what upset you?" he asked.

She looked up, and met his amused eyes.

"It didn't upset me. I only thought how utterly silly it was."

She had tried to hurt him, but he smiled.

"Yes, very silly," he agreed. "Men have these spasms of foolishness occasionally."

Her next words came out with the old primitive downrightness: they were not what the latest Philippa wished to say.

"Who is 'Priscilla'?"

"A lady of whom I am very fond."

She stared at him.

"But you—you told me that sort of thing was all done with—that you——"

"Yes, I did."

She rose.

"If you hadn't married me——"

"Well?"

"I mean—if I were out of the way would you marry this Priscilla?"

"Your sledge-hammer methods are really very funny, Philippa."

"Would you?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I couldn't."

She stood, frowning in thought: even she hesitated to put the result to him—that Priscilla was married already, or, as an alternative, disliked him.

He watched her amusedly.

"Everything to you is very black and white. You miss most of the subtler shades of grey, Philippa."

She hated him for the desolating sense of childishness, of immaturity he made her feel. She said roughly:

"I can't look for the paper any more."

"Very well."

She turned to add:

"And you oughtn't to expect me to!"

"I don't, child," he said gently. "I think you've shown yourself a real comrade to help me this afternoon."

She answered passionately:

"When you speak like that, it makes—this morning—seem such a pity!"

"It was a pity," he agreed sadly. "A great pity."

Whispered words broke from her laggingly:

"Why—did you—do—it, Michael?"

"If I try to make excuses for myself, you'll despise me the more, child. I have no decent excuse. Only the old worn one that I'm a man, and you were tantalizing."

She stared at him, wide-eyed.

"I can't understand—it's not *you*——" she said.

"A part of me that you should never see again if you stayed, Philippa."

There was a silence.

"I'm not so angry as I was," she said earnestly.

He looked at her and smiled.

"Let's talk it out, Philippa. Come, aren't we comrades enough for that?"

She hesitated.

"I don't think I like talking about it."

"You'll do it though."

She stood, neither assenting nor dissenting.

"I insulted you this morning," he said. "Under the peculiar circumstances it was a particularly caddish sort of thing to do. It's made me feel a pretty low down sort of fool, Philippa."

He waited, because she had made a movement to interrupt, but she drew back, and said nothing.

"You want to leave me at once. All I ask you to do is to stay here a week to think it over, while I'm in London."

"You are going away?"

"I want to see my publishers, and arrange several matters. I also want to go with Dick to his studio to see what he has been doing lately."

"Dick is going too?"

"Yes," he said slowly. "Do you want him to stay?"

"It's lonely alone."

He was silent.

"I don't mind though," she added. "I think I should like it."

"Then you will stay and think it over?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. We shall go to-morrow morning, Philippa."

"Yes?"

"I want you to try and see it as—a comparatively small thing. You are a good deal younger than I. It wasn't a very great thing, after all, was it? You looked very pretty, and I kissed you. I've treated you as a staid old housekeeper for a long while: put that in the balance. I don't think, if you stay, you'll ever have any cause of complaint again. You know, that beastly old Professor would have been much worse!"

"The Professor!"

She met his eye, struggled, and burst out laughing.

He passed his hand across his eyes.

"I—I didn't *mean* to laugh!" she said frowning. "I think it's a perfectly horrid thing to say of the poor old Professor. And—and——"

"And you really wanted to treat me to an icily dignified reprimand. I know. I deserve it. But you won't do it. We'll be good comrades again after a bit. Now you may go."

She moved slowly to the door, unsettled, dissatisfied, conscious that he had taken the situation out of her hands, and with Priscilla always in the background of her mind. She turned and eyed him gravely.

"I may have done you a great wrong by marrying you, Michael."

"Yes?"

"I mean—of course you said you had done with that sort of thing——"

"Marrying? I had never begun with it till I met you."

"No. Falling in love."

"Oh! Well?"

"There's Priscilla, you see."

"Yes; there's Priscilla."

"She worries me."

"She has often worried me, my child."

She looked at him thoughtfully.

"You know what I mean. You might have married her some day if I were out of the way."

"I've told you it's impossible."

"Why?"

"Does that question come within a housekeeper's province?"

She winced, and set her lips.

"No. But I begin to see that our—arrangement is not workable." She threw up her head. "Should I be expected to write menus for Priscilla, if you brought her to live here?"

He gave a low laugh. "Should I be expected to offer a young man my cigars if you brought one to live here?"

"That's different. You oughtn't to say that."

"I see no difference."

She looked at him, baffled.

"It's insulting me."

"No more than you insulted me."

"*I* haven't been scribbling maudlin rubbish——"

"Be quiet!"

His voice, low and cold, cut across her rash young tones, and silenced them.

"Black and white," he said resignedly. "There you are again. You see a few words on a piece of paper—I am a monster of immorality. Try not to be so wild, Philippa. I assure you you have no cause for any apprehension on any score whatever."

"I think you're forgetting how you behaved to me this morning."

"I'm forgetting nothing. I'm not likely to."

She turned and left the room.

## CHAPTER XII

She had been alone for three days: she wondered sometimes why she stayed: wondered why she felt a strong disinclination to go. She remembered some words of Anne's: "I think you're rather wasted on these times, since you've no intention of becoming a Suffragette. You've got a sort of prehistoric grit: you'd never give in."

Was it true? She had thought Anne lamentably wrong at the time. But now—no, she would not give in: she would not let Michael think she was afraid of him. She was not afraid, she was a little surprised at her lack of fear, but she knew she felt none. In these quiet days she walked a great deal with Rose: she was possessed by a certain restlessness: she found it necessary to tire herself before she could sleep at night.

Michael wrote to her, a quiet friendly letter that sent his conduct on that morning into a curious unreal distance. She began to think of it as, "How queer men are!" To study her face in the glass with the wonder—"What was it made him want to do that?" It became an interesting question, rather than a vital insult. Moreover, with the generosity in her nature there mingled a great frank sense of fairness, only sometimes choked beneath the wild impulses inherited from her mother; and now this fairness compelled the acknowledgment that, expecting him to treat her strictly as a housekeeper, she had wandered far from the *rôle* herself. On the third day she went as far as: "He misunderstood," and let it rest there.

The question of Priscilla she also let rest; she felt that in fairness, since she had learnt of her existence by an accident, she ought not to let her mind dwell on her. But

on the fourth day her thoughts were forced back to her. She came into the hall and found Rose worrying a handkerchief: it was a small handkerchief edged with lace, and it had a beautifully embroidered "P" in the corner. She stood holding it between her finger and thumb, looking at it frowningly: once she put it to her nose: it smelt of violets. She dropped it to the floor, and stood watching while Rose tore it into small pieces. And while she watched she faced the thought of her husband's infidelity, and her lack of right to make any objection. She did not accuse Michael, but merely accepted the realization that, logically, she was without the smallest claim on him. She followed the thought out relentlessly with her old almost brutal sincerity. When at last she moved from the fireplace, her face was white and steady: in her mind the thought: "So long as he respects my position as his housekeeper, I have no smallest right to object to anything he may choose to do."

And again, and this time it was an echo of words spoken long ago: "They always do, when they've been that sort themselves."

Well, he was that sort: she was sorry, but she had brought it upon herself.

She went into his study, and stood a minute looking at the bureau: she saw, in her mind, him bending over his writing. She realized that she did not believe he was "that sort"; it brought a sense of relief to her: she was glad, but she remembered her decision that he owed her nothing. She tried now to think why he had married her: she hardly thought, seeing how light her duties were, that he could have wanted her as housekeeper sufficiently to marry her. She knew him to be kind, but she did not consider him at all an unselfish man, nor one likely to be given to quixotic actions. On the other hand she thought he would be capable of being a good friend; he had called her that. Friendship? Was it that? She considered it gravely. He had loved a woman once, and knew he would never care

again. He knew that she would be happier with him than with the Professor: he needed a housekeeper: he was not very young. So he had married her.

She moved a little, but had not finished her thought.

Priscilla. He had written lately that he loved her. She had been a fool. Why not this Priscilla the name of the woman he had loved? Why not that he still loved her? The handkerchief? Rose might have routed that out from anywhere. She started back hotly to the hall: she wished she had not let Rose tear the handkerchief. She stooped and gathered up the shreds of cambric and lace. The freshness of the perfume that reached her cooled the warmth of her regret. She flung the pieces on the fire: she said to herself that it was done now anyhow. She turned from it with a shrug of her shoulders.

But she had with her now a final realization that her marriage had been a mistake.

## CHAPTER XIII

THAT night she could not sleep: she lay tossing from side to side, her brain racing with restless thought. Once, dozing, she dreamed that Michael said to her with reproach: "You have spoilt my life." She roused, weighed down by remorse, till she sat up, and angrily slew it. "You're a man—years older than I am. You asked me to marry you!"

She stared angrily into the darkness, and realized slowly that Michael had never complained, that he professed himself quite satisfied, was quite cheerful. It startled her. The unrest, the dissatisfaction then were with her? Why? She sought the reason, but could find no adequate one. A possible flirtation with an unknown Priscilla? She put it aside with scorn. What had a housekeeper to do with her employer's flirtations? She was a fool. She must be suffering from indigestion. She was thankful to be safely married. . . .

Was she?

She slipped to the floor, and started walking up and down: her mind reverted to the last day of her mother's life, she caught back the awful echo of that last cry: "May you never know the curse of love!"

Yes, she was thankful.

She bent over the chair where Rose lay asleep.

"Rose, wake up, and come down with me to fetch a book."

Rose burrowed deeper into the cushion. Philippa poked her, shook her, talked to her, but the lurcher lay curled up in the chair that was much too small for her, but into which she crept from her place on a rug on the floor, every night when Philippa had got into bed.

"Rose!"

Philippa lifted the beautiful head, but Rose's eyes only opened into a little slit, and down flopped the heavy head again.

Philippa laughed, and putting on her dressing-gown, took a candle and went downstairs to the study and chose a book. As she came out again into the hall, a draught from the door blew out her light. She had no matches, but remembered seeing a box on the mantelshelf in the hall.

"I hope looney Billy isn't as restless as I am to-night," she thought, and on the thought stood still, her heart jumping in her side. And into her mind flashed the echo of Mary's voice saying prosaically "a sort of a soft rustling noise it was." She stood straining her eyes towards the staircase from whence that soft rustling noise had seemed to come. There was still a dull red glow in the grate, and this lit dimly part of the hall and very faintly the lower part of the staircase. She told herself she had imagined the noise, that it was the wind outside, the coal falling in the nearly dead fire: she made a swift movement towards the mantelshelf in search of the matches, and as she did so her ear caught again that faint soft rustle on the stairs.

"Is that you, Mary?" she called faintly, and stood listening.

The fire crackled in an expiring little spurt of life; the clock ticked with an aggressive loudness, and Philippa's heart thumped uncomfortably, but there was no other sound or movement. She went quickly to the mantelshelf, and running her hand along it, found the box of matches, and lit her candle. She thought candle had never given so feeble, so flickering a light before, but she stepped boldly to the staircase, her wide eyes straining through the shadows. As she reached the foot, a sound arrested her; she stopped, listening to the long growl coming from above.

"Rose!" she called in a small voice. The dog growled again, but did not apparently move. Feeling suddenly that she would rather be with Rose in her own room even if she

shared it with the ghost, than down in the hall alone, she ran swiftly up the stairs, and into her bedroom. She closed the door, ran to her table, lit her lamp, and then looked at the lurcher, curled up in her chair.

"Rose, what were you growling at?"

Rose's eyes were open now, and she wagged her tail lazily.

Philippa shivered, and hurried into her bed.

"Nerves," she said. "And coincidence."

And she began to read the book she had brought up with her.

The next day she mentioned the incident to Mary.

Mary nodded phlegmatically.

"My grandfather did say that Mr. William always belonged to be restless on a windy night. He got fancying he heard things in the wind like. Sometimes he would say he heard his father's voice calling to him."

"Then do you really think he was in the hall with me last night, Mary?"

Mary re-arranged the toast rack on the table.

"I shouldn't like to say that, ma'am," she said cautiously. "It would seem some hard if you was to see him before me, and me waiting all these years, as you might say."

"You've never seen him, then?"

Mary shook her head.

"No, ma'am, I've not what you might call *seen* him, but I've *heard* him, and I've *smelt* him."

Philippa looked at her with horrified eyes.

"Oh, Mary, does he smell?"

"They always do, ma'am."

"What of?"

"Ghostyses, ma'am."

"But what is it *like?*"

Mary began to walk towards the door.

"Well, it's like—like——"

"Like *what,* Mary?"

Mary walked out of the room.

"Like ghostyses, ma'am," she said as she closed the door.

Philippa sat down before the coffee: Rose pushed a wheedling nose into her hand.

"That's all very well, Rose, it's easy to smile at ghostyses when the sun's shining, and the coffee smells so nice, but how about to-night?"

But her heart rose, and her fears seemed unreal, so beautifully did the sun shine. In the afternoon she went for a long walk with the lurcher, and from the cliffs watched the herring-drivers leave Tregarra. It was growing late, the sun was getting very low, great pink clouds hung overhead, a strip of land across the bay was a delicate pink and lilac haze. Philippa watched entranced as the herring-drivers caught the strong westerly breeze, and, their sails filling, went ploughing through the water. "As much sea as they can do with. Good luck to them!" She walked on slowly, her head raised to the breeze.

In a little while she turned and began to retrace her steps: the dusk had deepened, the sun dropped below the horizon. She saw a figure approaching; she thought she gave a jarring note to the soft lilac evening: she wondered too who she was, since strangers were rare there. When the stranger drew near she stopped:

"Can you tell me the quickest way to Porthdruick?" she asked in a soft, drawling voice.

Philippa directed her.

"It's quite three miles," she said with an involuntary glance at the lady's ornamental shoes.

She received in answer an expressive little shrug, and a —"You think I am no walker?"

"It was your shoes I doubted, not you," Philippa said, looking at the black-lashed eyes, and very golden hair beneath the very huge hat.

The lady lifted a foot and examined it carefully.

"My skirt is so narrow," she complained, as a child

complains. "I cannot see the thickness of the sole. Will you look?"

Philippa looked.

"It is fairly thick," she said.

The lady smiled.

"You see! I ordered 'strong shoes for country wear.' Does a buckle make one walk less easily?"

"It's getting very dark," Philippa said. "I hope you won't get lost."

"I love the dark. I walk in it as a cat does."

"Good-night," Philippa said.

"Good-night, and thank you so much."

Philippa walked on.

"Tawdry," she thought. "I know one is supposed to know by instinct, but I don't! Only I *fancy* she's not somehow *very* respectable!"

She turned and looked back, to find the lady standing watching her: she received a friendly wave of the great sable muff.

"Impertinence!" said Philippa, and walked on with head erect.

She did not think of her again, until she stood in her room before the mirror taking off her hat. Looking at her reflection in the glass, the other's face rose before her—pale, with melting brown eyes, and golden hair, a petulant pretty mouth. . . .

"How different we are—that woman and I." She bent closer. "I should think she has a tremendous sort of charm somehow. I can imagine, if I were a man, liking to kiss a soft, pretty thing like that. Charm, I believe, is what you quite lack, dour-faced Philippa, you!"

## CHAPTER XIV

THE next morning Philippa lay in bed and watched the night creep greyly from the skies, while the new day sprang forth glorious in a gleam and glimmer of gold. Through the open window came the sound and the smell of the sea, came too the cries of the sea-gulls. One wheeled beyond the window against the gleaming sky, and the cry of it seemed to touch something in her very heart.

"I love it!" she breathed. . . . "Cornwall." . . .

Her thoughts went back into her childhood: she smelt again the scent of soap and a fresh-scrubbed house and at once it visualized her father. She saw her mother tragically casting aside the golden frock. . . . Her head whirled suddenly with the vision of sand and sea spinning, and she felt herself swung fiercely in a pair of strong hands—"I care more for his little finger than for the whole of your stupid body!"

Poor mother, oh, poor mother!

Beyond the window a clamour arose amongst the gulls; Philippa's momentary gravity passed: she laughed as she sat up in bed. After all, wasn't Michael a dear to have saved her from *that?* That horrid thing that clutched you, and took all joy from life? She laughed again. She would make his life as easy as possible for him: they had got too serious somehow lately: they were good friends at bottom: it should be rather a fine example, in time, of the perfect friendship possible between a man and a woman.

"Rose, we're shamefully late! I can smell the bacon frying!"

Singing she bathed and dressed, singing she ran downstairs.

"Mary, I could almost seize you round the waist, and make you dance!"

"You could seize me till you were black in the face, ma'am, but you'd never make a dancer of me."

"Mary, would you dance with looney-Billy if he asked you to?"

"He'll be asking you to come lie in his grave with him, ma'am, if you speak so cruel of him."

"Mary, what a gruesome idea!"

She flung the windows wide, and ate her breakfast on the window-seat.

"The sun is scorching me," she told herself with joyous exaggeration. "December, and a sun like this! Oh, what a land it is!"

So it was that upon receiving a letter from Michael telling her that he should not return for another week, a desperate longing for someone with whom to share this beauty assailing her, she formed the sudden resolve to wire to Anne to come down. The necessary courage and defiance of Michael's expressed wishes were born of the wonderful day. It was not till an hour after the telegram had been despatched, the old postman who brought the letter taking it with him, that her courage began to fail. The glorious sun went suddenly behind heavy clouds, hail came pelting down, and settled finally into a thick drizzle of rain that blotted out everything but the great sad trees in the drive.

"She won't be able to come, of course, she is always so busy," she said, with her forehead pressed against the study window.

Then in anger at the feeling—was it relief?—in her heart, she poured scorn upon herself. Weren't lady housekeepers allowed to have a female friend to stay in the absence of the head of the house? What could he do anyway?—"Michael, I felt lonely, so I had Anne down for a few days." No, there should be no faintest suggestion of appeal or excuse: it should be: "Michael, I had Anne down to stay

while you were away." Just that. He would stare at her with his eyebrows down; perhaps he would say something sarcastic. Well, she would keep a light tone throughout (they were certainly getting too serious lately): perhaps an airy: "Do you want to give me a month's notice for this terrible sin?" Something like that.

Lovely, lovely to have Anne! When the reply came announcing her arrival on the morrow she felt only an immense excited delight.

"Mary, do you think the room next to mine would be damp if we had a fire all to-day and to-morrow?"

Mary was doubtful.

"Why not Mr. Charters's room, ma'am? That's not near so damp with facing south and being lived in now and again."

Philippa did not want that.

"His things, Mary——"

"Only a few paint-brushes and pictures. I'd soon put them away, ma'am."

"But it's all ready for him just as it is."

"Oh, is Mr. Charters coming back then, ma'am?"

"Some time, I hope, Mary."

"Are you expecting him *now,* ma'am?"

"No."

Mary's raised brows said why not give the lady his room then for the few days?

"I want her next to me, Mary. I'll go and see how damp it feels."

She ran upstairs and went first into the room Dick had occupied: she stood looking round. There was hardly anything to be moved; a few brushes in a jar, a sketch or two on the walls; on the table a pair of gold links. She took them up and stood looking down at them in the palm of her hand. She knew she did not want to move even those from the room: she wanted to keep this room as Dick's room. It *was* his room: the very smell of it was Dick's: the smell was turpentine. She loved the smell of turpen-

tine, and now it stood to her for gaiety and happy work; perhaps vaguely for more than that, since it was connected indissolubly with Dick, and Dick meant the lifting of that old nagging fear from her life. A fresh rush of warm gratitude brought the tears to her eyes: it seemed to come upon her as a new thing—the wonder that Dick, with his fastidious shrinking from anything sordid, should have gone into that squalid atmosphere, unasked, in the mere hope that he could wring something from her erstwhile landlady that should help perhaps to lift a cloud from her thoughts.

She put the links down gently, and leaving the room, closed the door firmly behind her. She went into the bedroom next to her own; she looked cheerfully at the walls stained darkly in great patches of wet. She rubbed the paper with her hand, and found that some of the outer mould would come off. She went into the corridor and called down gaily to Mary:

"Mary, bring up coals and wood! This room next to mine is hardly damp at all. Oh, and a duster. I want to rub the mouldiness off the walls."

"Not Mr. Charters's room, ma'am?"

"No, not Mr. Charters's room! And please be quick, Mary, I want the fire lit at once."

## CHAPTER XV

"So it's a success so far?" Anne said.

Philippa answered slowly:

"I think so, Anne."

Anne looked round the room: they were in the study, after dinner.

"Well?" Philippa said: there was a subtle suggestion of defiance in her tone.

"He leaves himself everywhere—he's that sort of man," Anne said. She looked at Philippa. "He's a *man,*" she said, and again, thoughtfully: "He's a *man.*"

"What else should he be?"

"That's merely silly."

Philippa shrugged lightly.

"You're trying to get a modern, analytical touch of suggestive mystery into a most simple situation, Anne. I suppose it's because you write articles and things for the papers."

Anne said irrelevantly:

"If Mike had been here I don't think I should have come."

Philippa poked the fire: she had found herself unable to tell Anne of Michael's refusal to have her there: a vague sense of loyalty to him stopped her, and behind that, a vaguer feeling of hospitality.

"Why?" she said.

"I can't forgive him for marrying you."

"You always talk as if he seized me by the hair of my head, and dragged me into matrimony."

"He did—morally."

"Oh, Anne!"

"He knows what it means. You don't. I can't understand his doing it."

"Friendship."

Anne looked at her and frowned.

"He knew I should marry the Professor. It was awfully decent of him, *I* think."

Anne still frowned.

"You're a reckless young person," she said at last. "You throw away life's best possibilities in a positively alarming way."

Philippa staring into the fire said irritatingly:

"Anne, considering you're an ardent feminist, aren't you rather old-fashioned in your ideas on life's possibilities?"

One of Anne's most lovable attributes was a wide and understanding patience.

"You mean?"

"The only possibilities I've thrown away are those connected with love and that sort of thing."

"And you think love and that sort of thing have grown old-fashioned?"

Philippa frowned.

"You know what I mean quite well. There's more in life than those things. Look at you."

Anne smiled at her gravely.

"Well? Aren't you happy, Anne?"

"Yes. But I might be happier."

"Do you wish you'd married?"

"None of the men I've known," Anne said equably.

There was silence.

"That's all I've thrown away," Philippa said.

"It's a pretty big 'all,' Phil."

"You think so?"

"So do you, my dear."

"Don't call me that!"

"Your temper hasn't improved, has it? Why sound so fierce?"

Philippa laughed.

"Michael calls me that when he wants to make me feel specially childish and absurd. I hate it. I'm sorry."

Anne looked at her thoughtfully.

"Will you come back to London with me, Phil, for a while?" she said abruptly, and saw the startled surprise in Philippa's face, heard it in her voice.

"Oh, no, I couldn't! I—I mean, you see, there are my duties, Anne."

"Housekeepers have holidays."

"Do they? But it's too soon. I couldn't go away yet."

The surprise of an entirely new idea suddenly presented still lingered in her eyes.

"Does Dick come down much?" Anne asked, refastening the clasp of a bangle on her wrist.

"No, not much."

"Is he coming for Christmas?"

"I hope so."

"You and he are good friends, didn't you say?"

"I don't remember saying it, but we are. Hasn't he told you so?"

Anne was silent.

Philippa pushed it.

"Hasn't he told you what good friends we are, Anne?"

"Dick? No, I don't think he has: we haven't talked of you much."

"Am I snubbed?"

"Why? You see, Dick's confidences lately are a good deal concerned with Enid Hewittson."

Philippa nodded.

"I know: the paragon."

"Dick has very correct tastes, you know."

"*Dick* has!"

Anne looked down at her frowningly.

"Haven't you found that out? Do you think he's Bohemian?"

"No, he's too clean," Philippa said carelessly.

Anne said suddenly:

"Is it because you hope Dick is coming down soon that you don't want to come to me, Phil?"

And sat and watched the slow startled colour creep into Philippa's face.

"Oh, Anne!" came first in reproach. "Not *want* to come to you——"

Anne waited, not responding to the appealing pause: she never frustrated her opportunities by risking the diverting of an unuttered response.

"I hadn't thought, Anne—no—of course I want to come—dreadfully—in a way——"

Anne waited, smoothing the shimmering satin over her knee in a restful sort of way.

Philippa's wide worried eyes were on the hand gently moving to and fro over the pale satin.

"I think it must be that I feel—you see, I really do so little in return for what Michael has given me——"

Anne spoke then:

"Your board and lodging, you mean?"

"Oh, Anne! Look at this frock! Do you think I could afford a frock like this?"

"Any man will give any woman pretty frocks if she'll accept them. What else?"

"Oh, lovely things."

"What things?"

"A blotter—one of those soft green leather blotters I've always longed for, but never dared buy. I bought that, and a tortoiseshell brush—with silver—and shoes and silk stockings—oh, lots of things!"

"Jewellery?" Anne said.

"N-no. I don't think I care much for jewellery."

Anne was silent: in her ears Philippa's eager voice—"Oh, I wish I could afford to buy some beautiful rings—and a necklace——"

"And Mike hasn't given you rings and things?"

"Oh, no! Does a man give that sort of thing to his housekeeper?"

"He doesn't, as a rule, give her his name, does he?"

"Anne," Philippa said hotly, "it's not like you! You're *pecking* at me!"

Anne smiled her sweet slow smile at her.

"So I am. I'm in a bad temper, I think. Perhaps I've got rather spoilt, rather to look upon myself as a sort of universal Godmother. It's always a snare for a spinster—the sort of spinster I am. And I'd all sorts of lovely plans for God-daughter Phil."

"What were they?"

"Oh, horribly mundane, you will think. Husband and children."

Philippa shook her head.

"Anne, if you knew! I—I always dreaded it. We're unlucky—my mother's life was a tragedy. I married Michael to keep that away——"

"I know," Anne said, and added:

"And the second thing I wanted for you, Phil?"

"Children?" Philippa said in a business-like voice. "O well, I don't know. I think I'd like to adopt one later on perhaps, if Michael didn't mind; but not yet. Of course there's always the drawback that it might have madness or consumption or murder or thieving in its blood. That's what always stops me. Or even if you could find those things out pretty well, how could you tell it wouldn't have something awful like speaking through its nose or a cackling laugh, or ugly legs?"

Anne brushed it all aside with a searching:

"Adoption never brings the faintest realization of what motherhood means, Phil."

Philippa thought a minute.

"I know. It's something very beautiful, and big, and wonderful, Anne, that's got nothing to do with me; like Beethoven composing his Moonlight Sonata, or Father Damien going to live amongst lepers, or Florence Nightingale—that sort of thing——"

Her voice trailed away, the sentence uncompleted, the

vague deep thought too difficult of translation into speech.

But Anne, smiling, understood.

"It should not have been as far from you as those things," she said gently, and left it there, unsatisfied and afraid.

In the silence that followed, the sound of wheels on wet gravel became audible on the drive.

"Someone's coming," Anne said.

"It's Michael," Philippa said, and rose and stood waiting.

Into Anne's face crept a look of consternation: she checked an exclamation as her eyes turned to Philippa's face. Fear? Surely—surely not. She continued to look, unable to look away. Philippa afraid of Michael! The thought, to Anne, was hardly bearable.

"Phil," she said softly.

Philippa did not hear her: the wheels stopped: Michael's voice—it was unmistakably Michael's voice—spoke.

"It *is* Michael!" Philippa said.

She did not move, she stood waiting; they heard the sounds of his entrance into the hall, his voice to Rose—"Where's your mistress, Rose?"—A direction to someone; Mary's staid tones, and then he opened the study door and came down the steps.

"This is taxing a housekeeper's ingenuity," he said. "How are you, Anne? I am forgiven then?"

Anne did not laugh.

"I don't think I would have come if I'd known you would come back, Mike," she said.

"No? How lucky for me, and for Philippa, that you didn't know. Philippa, it's unfair to take you like this, but I am very hungry. I've been three hours driving the twelve miles!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Michael. I'll go and see what there is."

He followed her from the room.

"I'll go and have a wash," he said.

In the hall she paused and looked back at him uncertainly: the colour was bright in her face now. He was walking across unconcernedly to the stairs.

"Michael!"

He stopped: she met his cold gaze, and faltered.

"Well?" he said.

"I asked Anne down——"

He raised his eyebrows.

"So I gathered."

"I was going to tell you."

"Were you?"

Suddenly her eyes flamed.

"How *dare* you doubt my word? I'm glad I asked her! It isn't a sin! Why shouldn't I do it?"

"No reason at all," he began to go up the stairs. "It's merely equivalent to the housemaid and cook's trying on their mistress's clothes in her absence, and playing the piano——" his voice died away up the stairs.

Philippa interviewed Mary, and returned to the study. Anne was standing before the fire; she turned and looked at Philippa searchingly as she entered.

"I do hate people turning up unexpectedly," Philippa said impatiently. "Rose, get down! Don't claw my frock!"

"Why didn't he wire?" Anne asked.

"I don't know."

"It was rude of me to say that about not coming if I'd known he would come back," Anne said frowning.

"Oh, he doesn't mind."

"I know. That makes me more annoyed with myself. It's such a waste to be bad-tempered to no purpose."

"Michael always gives one that feeling," Philippa said.

She added restlessly:

"Anne, what else ought I to do? I've told Mary about supper and to light his fire——"

"Oughtn't you to ask him about his doings in London?"

"It sounds horrid, as if I were accusing him of flirtations and things."

"Would you mind if he went in for that sort of thing?"

Anne waited as if her question would compel a rather important answer.

Philippa shrugged lightly.

"Why should I? It wouldn't affect me except in so far as it affected his temper. When he's cross he's very particular about his soup."

Brent came in looking pale and fresh from cold water and soap.

"That fool of a Dempster couldn't see me after all, Philippa. He'd been called away, so I made straight for the station and came here. I hope it won't be a nuisance for you."

"Oh, no. Your supper is ready, Michael."

"Thank you."

He looked at her, but she did not move; for a second or two their eyes met, then he turned and left the room. There was a silence between her and Anne, till Philippa said aggressively:

"It's not part of my duty to sit and watch him eat."

Anne said nothing.

"Is it, Anne?"

Anne smiled and looked up at her over the magazine she was reading.

"I should have thought so," she said.

"But it's rude to leave my guest."

Anne had no answer for a thing so absurd.

"You *are* my guest, even though we *are* friends."

To that too Anne gave no answer.

Philippa knelt on the rug and hugged Rose.

"Everyone's hateful to-night," she said.

Anne dropped the magazine to her knee and studied her thoughtfully.

"What a child you are, Phil!"

"I'm not. I feel quite old and sad sometimes."

"Don't you feel any sense of responsibility? Don't you realise that from being free and irresponsible you've bound yourself for life? And you've got to go through with it now——"

"Meaning that I've got to go and watch Michael eat," Philippa interrupted frowning. "Very well."

She walked out of the room: Anne's gaze followed the slim white figure, and after it had gone, she did not return to Harper's, but sat looking gravely into the fire.

"Anne thinks it's my duty to come and watch you eat," Philippa said, entering the dining-room.

"Anne's a sensible woman," Brent replied. "This is very good soup."

"You amaze me!"

"Oh. Why?"

"You must be in a good temper to call the soup good."

"And you hoped I'd be in a bad one because of your having Anne here?"

"It's hardly likely I should hope that: you're horrid when you're cross."

"Nevertheless you're disappointed that I'm not cross."

She looked at him, baffled, and spoke to Rose.

"You shall have some soup, my love."

She put some on a plate. "She's been such a darling while you were away—oh, Rose, don't you want it? She must be ill, Michael! I do hope she's not going to have anything the matter with her. Why don't you like it, Rose? It's lovely soup——" She picked up a spoon, and tasted the soup. She stared at Brent amazed, with her nose crinkled disgustedly.

"You *like* it, Michael? Why, it's nothing but salt and water!"

"Pardon me, there's carrot in it: I just came across a piece."

"You said it was *good!*"

"So it is."

She watched him in silence for awhile.

"Oh, don't eat it, Michael! It's too horrid."

"I'm not asking you to have it, Philippa. Mayn't I be the judge of what I like for myself?"

"Oh, certainly. I shall know in future what sort of soup to give you; the recipe is, at any rate, beautifully simple. Ingredients—water, salt, one small carrot."

"And turnip," he said gravely. "There is a little white square occasionally which I think is turnip."

"And turnip," she said.

He began to talk pleasantly about his book; about Dick and his work.

"He's getting on," he said. "There's a quality in his work it lacked a little while ago. He's coming down here for Christmas."

"Oh, I'm glad! I should have thought he would have spent it——"

"At the Hewittsons?" he said in her pause. "They're abroad."

"Won't it be dull for him here?"

"He chooses to come."

She sat silent, wondering when he was going to introduce the subject of her staying or going. She recognized that she had tacitly told him she meant to stay, since she had talked of having Dick there. . . .

She said impatiently:

"You seem very sure that I mean to stay with you, Michael?"

"I am sure," he said quietly.

She compressed her lips.

"I haven't told you so."

"You have, indirectly."

"How?"

"Need we talk about it any more, Philippa?"

"I want to know what makes you so sure," she said doggedly.

He helped himself to mustard.

"You wouldn't have had Anne down if you'd meant to go," he said.

She pondered it.

"You mean I could have gone to her?"

"No, not that."

"What then?"

She repeated in his silence:

"What then?"

He looked up at her seriously.

"It would have savoured of meanness. You'd never do a mean thing," he said.

She was surprised at his sudden gravity.

"I do lots of mean things," she said unhappily.

"Oh. What are they?"

"I've spoken snappily of you to Anne."

He smiled.

"I daresay I shall again."

"Quite possibly. To-night—brushing your hair. If women wore short hair, like men, there wouldn't be half the mischief done that there is now."

"We're not fools—Anne and I."

"No, but you've hair to brush out, and you do it in each other's rooms."

"I won't mention your name to-night!" she exclaimed.

He looked at her shrewdly.

"That's a promise, Philippa."

She was surprised.

"All right. Why should I want to talk about you?" she said.

"I don't know, but you do."

She began to laugh.

"You're detestable."

"You don't think so really."

"I think I do."

"We're good friends really, child."

She pondered.

"Can one be good friends only sometimes?"

"Yes, until——"

"Until what?"

"The friendship deepens, and then it becomes for always, whatever happens."

A wistful look came into her eyes.

"I think I'd rather like to be like that—with you, Michael."

"Would you? I think we shall be—in time."

She shook her head.

"It would always be in patches for me. You're too irritating for it to be always."

He went on placidly with his beef.

She sat on the arm of a chair watching him gravely.

"Why aren't you ever surprised, Michael—ever anything?"

"You surprise me quite a lot."

"To-night—Anne—you didn't look a bit surprised."

"That's not very astonishing. I heard voices—Mary elucidated for me, and it's not considered polite, you know, to greet a guest with amazement."

She was silent.

At last she asked him:

"Are you going to punish me for disobeying you?"

"No."

"It was a simply horrid thing of you to do, you know, Michael, to refuse to let me have Anne——"

"My dear, need we go back to that?"

That froze her into stiff silence: she did not speak again except to ask him if he would care for custard and stewed apples. He replied that he would like cheese and biscuits. She asked him if he would mind her going back now to Anne. He said certainly not. Then he recalled her.

"It doesn't seem to have got very far—that friendship, does it?"

She stood stricken into quick thought. He watched her.

"Sit down a minute and tell me what has happened while I've been away," he said,

She went back to her chair.

"I've walked a good deal. Oh, Michael, I love Cornwall!"

He smiled.

"That's good. How has the fishing been?"

"Not good. The fishermen say they've never known the herring so scarce."

"Poor devils, after a rotten pilchard season, too. Well, what else?"

"I heard looney-Billy one night."

He buttered a piece of biscuit.

"Did you see him too?"

"No; but I heard him rustle, and Rose heard him too."

"Rose is a fool, she's always growling or barking at something!" he said irritably.

She looked indignant and surprised.

"She's so quiet, Michael! What a shame!"

"Well, what sort of a noise does looney-Billy make?"

"A sort of soft rustling, and Rose isn't a fool, because it's only since then that she's always nosing about outside the Closed Door!"

"Oh, is she?"

"Yes: I've found her there several times."

"When is she to go back to her own people?"

"Rose? Oh, not yet, I hope. Mrs. Harvey offered to take her back the other day, but I said I wanted to keep her as long as we stay here."

"She ought to go back."

"Why?"

"It's her place."

"She does no harm here. I can't think why you don't like her. She's simply adorable, I think, and she's so fond of you."

He did not reply.

"How long are we going to stay here, Michael? Anne can't understand why we don't go to your home——"

"Do you want to go?"

"Not yet. I love Cornwall so, but if you want to go——"

"I don't. It's quieter here. I want to stay here till I've finished my writing."

She rose.

"So you're not altogether unhappy here with me, Priscilla?" he said gently.

She stood staring at him while the blood crept hotly over her face.

He looked at her surprised.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing, Michael, only I should be obliged if you would try to remember that my name is Philippa."

"What else should it be?"

"You called me Priscilla just now."

"Did I really? Well, it's a pretty enough name, to call you, my dear."

She had opened the door.

"You see, I happen to consider it insulting."

She left the room.

## CHAPTER XVI

PHILIPPA enjoyed Christmas. Afterwards looking back she found it difficult to bring Michael, with any prominence, into the picture. Dick was always there—Dick and herself: Michael had been busy with his writing: Sir Henry Moreton had written an urgent request for more manuscript on as early a date as possible.

There was one occasion when she had gone contritely from pulling crackers with Dick to Brent in his study, and begged to be allowed to help him. She had found him sitting in an easy chair, in his favourite attitude, leaning forward, his hands between his knees, staring frowningly into the fire.

"I want some work, Michael," she said, for some reason feeling nervous. "But you aren't working, are you?"

"I was thinking something out," he said.

"Oh! I hope I haven't disturbed you. I—I felt I ought to do something—now——"

"Don't make me into a bogey, Philippa."

She laughed.

"I don't. Only I've been playing these last days——"

"Are you tired of it? You and Dick?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Why afraid?"

"I don't know, only one feels——"

"Well, don't feel it. Play and work are both desirable so long as you do either with all your heart and soul."

"I didn't know you felt like that," she said surprised.

"Didn't you? Now get back to your play, and leave me to my work."

She stood, uncertain.

"You—you won't come and play too?" she said with a little laugh.

"Auntie, I've got the most gorgeous cap you ever saw. I pulled the cracker with Rose! Don't you stay and work for Mike—it's Christmas!"

Brent looked at her sombrely: a little laugh played in her eyes, and at the corners of her lips.

"Run along," he said.

She ran, accusing Dick of cheating, since he'd pulled a cracker without her. . . .

On one other occasion Michael shone out prominently in the retrospective picture. She had come down early for dinner, and had, in some game or another of hers and Dick's, decorated him with a red rosette. The fact that gave him the prominence was that when she had approached him to pin the favour to his lapel, she had noticed a faint perfume about him, a perfume of violets. . . .

Afterwards at dinner, she found herself looking with a humorous shrinking for a long hair on his shoulder. She looked too for a patch of powder, hating herself for vulgarity. In her repulsion for her thoughts she spoke out:

"Michael, have you got scent on?"

"Me? Scent?" he said, astonished, and added: "Soap —it's rather strong—some I got in London." And again he added, as he helped himself to potatoes: "Does it smell of violets?"

"Yes," she said.

He nodded.

"Beastly stuff."

When she had gone up to bed she had walked into his bedroom and across to the wash-stand. She had picked up his soap, and smelt it: it smelt, as she had known it would, of the faint, fresh, clean scent that she always associated with him.

She went to her own room and stood thinking: she felt uncomfortable, mean and bewildered. When she heard Brent and Dick come up to bed she waited till Dick had closed his door, and she went to Brent's room and knocked. She opened the door, and standing stiffly on the threshold, she said:

"I came in here and smelt your soap. It's what you always use, and it doesn't smell of violets."

He looked round at her with his tie in his hand.

"Don't you think so?"

"But *you* smelt of them."

He ignored it.

"Why did you come and tell me?"

"I felt so mean—poking and prying," she burst out.

He gave a little laugh.

"Oh, Philippa, how true you are to yourself!"

She frowned.

"Go to bed," he added gently.

She looked at him, her feelings complex, chiefly conscious of an immense wonder at his power of ignoring a subject.

"You're thinking me a black villain," he said suddenly. "Well, don't. I'm not. I'm much more despicable than that. I hover and hedge and doubt. If I were a thorough villain I should take you into my arms now, and kiss you till you——" He did not finish his sentence.

She stared, white-faced.

"Why?" she stammered at last foolishly.

"Oh, because you look so pretty standing there," he said lightly.

She shook with anger.

"You're insulting."

"No. You needn't fear. I'm not going to do it."

Philippa, outraged, flung out a taunt, the memory of which afterwards scorched her with shame.

"Aren't you confusing me with the person who smells of violet scent?"

She did not wait for his answer.

Back in her room she had paced it far into the night. When she got into bed she had two definite thoughts: the one was that she would never give in, and go: the other that, probably, he had been holding and caressing another scented handkerchief of Priscilla's. "Men," she had decided as she fell asleep, "are so stupid and sentimental."

## CHAPTER XVII

"I FEEL so restless," Philippa said.

"So do I. Let's go for a long walk," Dick said.

"It's going to rain."

"It always does in Cornwall. D'you mind? Phil, do come. I shall go mad if you don't!"

She looked at him startled.

"I feel all edgey and irritable. I want only you—Auntie."

She let a little quick breath escape her parted lips at the last word: she smiled.

"Very well, nephew Dick," she said, unconscious of what it was that prompted her to emphasise their relationship.

"Shall we take sandwiches?" she said. "And a Thermos?"

"Oh, bother sandwiches. Let's start now."

"How cross you are!"

"I don't care. Why don't you go and put on your things?"

"I must ask Michael if he'll want me first."

"Damn Michael!"

She turned reprovingly.

"Oh, Dick!"

He laughed angrily.

"Oh, I didn't mean it. I know you're his wife and all that. And that I'm his guest and so forth. I only meant—oh, good Lord, what's it matter what I meant? *Why can't we start?*"

She hurried into the study. Brent said he had nothing for her to do, and that if she were not back to lunch, he

would eat it alone. He further added that if Dick were in the same temper as he had appeared to be at breakfast, he thought it probable the walk would be a stormy one.

"I think he's worried about his work," Philippa said.

"Do you?"

"You see, he has been here for more than a fortnight now, and I think he thinks he ought to get back to work——"

"And what prevents him?" Brent inquired blandly.

"Oh—well—he likes it down here, you see."

"Then let him take his holiday without grousing," he said harshly.

"You're always hard on Dick, aren't you?" she said tentatively.

"Am I?" he looked at her musingly. "Well, I hope you'll enjoy your walk," he said.

She went back to the hall, to be impatiently accused of dawdling. She put on her coat and hat quickly, and Dick heaved a sigh of relief as he banged the hall door behind them.

"Let's take Tregarra on our way," she said. "I love to look down into the harbour from the top of the hill."

Good walker as she was she had some ado to keep up with him to-day: Dick strode along, his eyes gazing moodily in front of him, speaking not at all. Philippa too was silent: it was always easy for her to be silent.

When they reached the long hilly road that led down to Tregarra they stopped, and stood looking down on the little harbour. It was a grey day, and the cottages, white and grey, loomed through a vivid mist of blue smoke. The great black herring-drivers lay in the harbour, almost aground; the pilchard boats—misty blurs of green and blue—were hauled up on the hard. Behind the cottages the country rose, small green meadows, and ploughed fields. The sea was a wonderful deep green with white breaking crests of the channel swell outside.

Philippa drew a long breath and glanced at Dick.

"Could you paint that?"

"Can't paint my grandmother."

She sighed, disappointed.

"Let's go on," she said, and turned back up the hill.

Presently the rain began to fall softly, insidiously, almost only a mist.

Philippa said:

"Are we doing any good? Shan't we go back?"

His reply in its boyishness surprised her.

"I'm so wretched, Phil."

"Oh Dick, I'm so sorry."

She stopped and looked at him. They were crossing a meadow: she turned her eyes away from his moody face and looked at the cattle gleaming softly, blurred, through the mist.

"Can I help?" she said tentatively.

"I don't know. I hate being down. I've never been really miserable before."

She looked back at him gravely: his worried blue eyes met hers appealingly: she felt years older than he was.

"Can't you tell me what it's about?"

"It's about you."

"Me?"

She was startled.

"Let's go on to Porthvernick. There's quite a jolly little inn there—better than most of the hovels about here. I found it that day I walked in from the station. Do you remember, Phil? You appeared suddenly out of the mist and smiled at me, and it seemed as if the sun had come out. Do you remember?"

"Yes; it was a horrid day—raining."

"It wasn't horrid after I'd met you. You're like that. You put life and warmth into things—sometimes. Sometimes you make life cold and bare. You've that sort of power."

"I seem to be making it cold for you now, and it's cold enough to-day without my aiding it. How far is the inn, Dick?"

"Only two miles—about that—from here. If we can cut across country, less I should think."

"Well's let's hurry then. Dick, aren't those purple and blue hills wonderful in the mist?"

"Yes. D'you know, Phil, I feel as if I never want to touch a brush again."

"Oh Dick!"

"Fact. I feel sort of impatient of it. It seems childish. What is it, after all? It isn't life. It's just playing with colours, like a child. I want to do something *alive*—fight or dig or something till my muscles ache, and I just drop off in my bed. Or I want to go out into the world, and fight for some cause—work and sweat at it, and come back to you for a smile of encouragement——"

He was switching wildly at the hedge with his stick, his stride had grown tremendous.

"Could you do a little in the cause of humanity just now?" she panted. "Walk a little slower, I mean."

He was all contrition.

"Poor little girl, you're out of breath. Sit on this stile a minute. Wait, I'll spread out my coat——"

She sat primly looking out over the sea, with his coat spread out beside her: she had fought his taking it off in vain, but she would not give in, and sit on it. He stood glowering, getting gloriously wet.

"It's very silly," she said.

"I like it. I'm getting wet for you."

"It isn't doing me much good."

"No; because you're cruel."

She looked up at him expostulatingly.

He was standing above her, his head against the grey sky, held high and back, his eyes were upon her. He looked young and handsome, and in some disturbing subtle way, victorious.

"I love you, Phil," he said.

She sat quite still, all the blood driven from her cheeks, her wet, white face still upturned to his.

"I oughtn't to say it. I'm a scoundrel," he said, and it was as if he chanted some triumphant virtue.

Still she said nothing, nor did she move.

"Love you—love you—love you—who cares? What harm can it do? I'll just go on loving and serving you till I die."

Words came from her dry lips then.

"Oh no, Dick—no——"

"Yes," he cried, "yes! And I'll go back to my painting, and paint for you! I'll live for you! All my life I'll give to you."

She slipped to the ground and stood facing him: her voice now was still and cold.

"You are my nephew," she said.

"Yes! I'm your nephew. What's the odds? I couldn't have you. You are Mike's. But I love you. I harm no one. I ask nothing, but just to go on loving you till I die."

"Dick, it—can't be true. We were such good friends." She shivered. "Poor Dick, has this awful thing really come to you?"

"Awful! Say glorious rather. A dream to keep for ever!"

She stared at him, at a loss. He was triumphant, vibrant with joy: he smiled at her through the mist, gloriously alive, gloriously happy.

"Come, Phil, we'll go on, and get something to eat at the inn. Eat! Lord, I could eat an ox!"

She followed him in silence; her eyes stared in front of her with a curious dazed expression. She was conscious chiefly of an immense surprise and a deep pity for him. At present she did not think of herself at all, except very vaguely to feel a confused gratitude that she was married, and so immune from this thing that had seized upon Dick. She could not understand his glad acceptance of it: her pity for his wakening to its cruelty made her heart ache.

Two or three times she murmured little sentences, but

he did not heed her, he walked, exalted, talking of what he would do.

No ox, nor part of an ox, awaited them at the inn, they had to be content with bacon and eggs. Dick attacked his portion as if it were indeed the ox of which he had spoken, but Philippa ate slowly and sparingly, her troubled, puzzled eyes now turning to Dick's boyish face, now turning away. She spoke little, having indeed little to say. Once she said slowly:

"You will have to go to-morrow, won't you?"

It brought him up short: he stared at her, then expostulated.

"Why? Why should I go? Can my love harm you?"

She had no answer to that, only the troubling of a vague instinct.

"Why mayn't I go on loving you? I ask for nothing in return, but the kindness and friendship you have always given me."

She spoke on a quick impulse.

"But you've spoilt that!"

He was reproachful.

"Oh, Phil, what a cruel thing to say! How spoilt it? It will be a beautiful thing surely—our relationship—friendship and pity on your part, and on mine, love."

She felt it all wrong, and murmured something in which the words "underhand, deceitful," came to hurt him.

"There won't be anything of that sort. I thought you knew me better than that. I will never make love to you."

"Will you be able to help it?" escaped her forcefully.

He was surprised, and quite sure of himself. She said no more for some while, being oddly tired. "I am so tired, Dick. I can't think clearly."

He was all sympathy and tenderness; he came round to her, and bent over her.

"Poor little girl—poor little child."

She looked up into his loving boy's face.

"You mustn't, Dick——"

"Is it more than I've done before?" he demanded.

Bewildered, she burst into tears.

He knelt beside her chair, touching her arm, her damp hair.

"Don't cry, Phil, I'm so happy. I was wretched before. But now I see my way. Phil, put your dear little hand on my head—just once—just to show you forgive me, and trust me. Phil! Just once, Phil."

She put out her hand tremblingly and laid it for a moment on his head.

"Your hair's all wet," she said, with a little breathless laugh.

"Thank you," he said, and rose.

"Phil, if you've done, you'd better put on your hat, and we'll start back."

She caught nervously, relieved, at his change of tone. On the way back she said no more—either way—of his going or staying: she was too tired to think clearly.

But when Brent asked her if she had enjoyed her walk, she blushed vividly, and, further, made nervous excuses for the colour in her face.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Dick stayed two days more, and then at her piteous wish, he, for a time, went away. He himself saw no reason for his going, as he told her repeatedly. She could give him no reason which he could not, with a few words, dispose of; she fell back on the reasonless plea: "I can't bear it. I hate it. Won't you go, Dick?"

He held out against that for two days. During those days he was a good deal with her, and he never gave her cause to fear the lover in him. She found him curiously disturbing, curiously attractive in his young triumphant gladness.

"It's what I've been waiting for," so he told her. "Inspiration, Phil. The quiet, respectable, dull life I saw stretching before me has been shivered into atoms of glorious colour and wonder. Don't grudge it to me. A life dedicated to a love that can never be fulfilled. Isn't it a beautiful thing?"

Sharply she replied that she should have thought it a very tiresome thing. It took her like that sometimes: the fighting of her feelings and his talk made her irritable. And she had not slept at night. She had had to clear her mind, understand herself, but in the morning she was no nearer a clear solution. At times she found his certainty, his happiness, almost repugnant to her. Once she said harshly:

"I think you've spoilt things. I think there's no reason for so much joy."

And at another time she said:

"Do you think it's nice for me to feel that I've spoilt your life?"

But he would not have it that it was spoiled. Wasn't that what he was to show her? Wasn't he to show her in his painting, in his way of living, what his love of her was to do for him?

Once she dragged a deep thought up, and put it into halting words.

"I feel—it's horrid—to—Michael."

At that he had laughed. To Michael? How then? Why? Could the most loving, the most devoted husband object to a love such as his, a love that claimed nothing, sought for no reward? Then how—Michael?

She turned from it hurriedly, hot-faced, feeling she had been foolish.

"I am tired," she said, and again: "Oh, Dick, I am so tired."

It was in the middle of the second night that, waking suddenly from troubled sleep, she lay, hot all over, fresh from a dream in which she had been kissed. . . .

"It might have been a ghost!" she pleaded to her shamed heart. "It was hardly a man—no one——"

And the searching question: "Whom should it have been?" that led quite suddenly to another question: "Was it possible that she should ever love Dick, as he loved her?"

She lay, trembling, terribly afraid. Thought came down upon her relentlessly, not to be kept at bay; it swept down her little defences, left her shivering in a chaos of half-understood feelings and impulses. She saw suddenly that her marriage was no safeguard against love, as she had thought it. She told herself many times that she did not love Dick; she told herself she was very, very fond of him, and very grateful to him. That was natural surely! And it was all. And the dream-kiss? She turned from it, hurt sharply. But it came back, and with it the thought: "You have never dreamed like that before." That she sought to stifle with a defiant: "It's all this sentimental talk of love that made me dream a stupid thing like that."

And, upon that, a curious pang, as if—surely it was as if she had desecrated something? Desecrated what? She followed it out, cruel to something that cried within her. What had there been to desecrate? A foolish dream of a man who kissed you? She turned, tortured, and buried her face in her pillow. Lying so, she seemed suddenly to hear Anne's kind voice: "In the night one is always so tragic, so almost melodramatic. Things are so big. It's as if you are looking at them in the magnifying side of a shaving mirror; in the morning you look at them in the other side of it."

Philippa lay very still. Anne was surely right.

After a while she rose, and went to the open window: it was a warm night, a beautifully smelling night. She leant out drinking in the scent of the wet mould and grass, and, fainter, the scent from a haystack. A longing came upon her to smell the sea: the light breeze was blowing from the south: she knew that the window in the corridor would give her what she wanted. She opened her door very quietly, and slipped into the passage and along to the corridor. She unfastened the window, and leaning out drew in a great whiff of glorious sea-scented air. Her thoughts went back to a night in her childhood when she had done the same thing: she remembered the horror of the sudden grab from behind; Rabbie's indignant voice: "By gar, you frightened me some!" and the being carried, kicking, back to her room and her bed. It soothed her—the thought that it was the same sea rolling in in the same bay. . . . She ceased worrying and thinking, she leant out, shivering, but at peace, wrapt round dreamily by the soft chill beauty of the night. No thought of nervousness, no memory of ghosts disturbed her, so that when her absent ear caught suddenly a rustle and the sound of footsteps on wet dead leaves beneath, the shock was tremendous. For a moment she heard nothing but the loud beat of her own heart, then staring out and down, she caught again the unmistakable sound of footsteps in the little copse on the south side of the house. A poacher probably—there were

many rabbits in the copse. Looney-Billy surely would not choose such a place to walk in, and he subject to rheumatism! So she joked—and waited. Afterwards she remembered with astonishment her lack of feeling when she heard a voice, and at once, unhesitatingly, knew it as Brent's. It seemed to her afterwards that all her thought, her concentration and feeling were given in the effort to hear whose the voice would be that should answer his. For a time no voice seemed to answer, or, answering, it spoke too low to reach her. There were some moments of such a stillness as she had never known before: unconsciously she stilled her shivering, and waited, tense. The stillness was broken at last, and by Brent again: his voice was closer now, so close that she caught what he said quite plainly: the words seemed to drop, one by one, on to her brain, trivial words invested by her, as she recognised afterwards, with ridiculous importance. "My dear child, it's so wet, I'm afraid of your catching cold."

And then at last the answering voice—soft, petulant: "Oh, to think of such things on a night like this!"

Fool! quoth Philippa with sudden wild bitterness, and she rose and hurried back to her room. As she went she reiterated "Fool! Fool!" with intense bitterness. And in her room she stood in sudden thought, for she knew that somewhere she had heard that soft petulant voice. All other thought was held in abeyance by the need of satisfying this query: she stood shivering, her mind working back till she saw a beautiful lilac evening with the herring-drivers leaving the harbour—a strong westerly breeze—"You think I am no walker?"—golden hair under a big black hat, a little foot upheld, great dark-lashed eyes——

Philippa got into bed, and drew the bed-clothes up to her chin. Michael and that woman. That woman and Michael. Charm—yes, she had thought that then. Priscilla? Perhaps, perhaps not. He was that sort. He was afraid of her catching cold. She might well do that, if she wore the same ridiculous shoes as she had worn that day.

Michael and that woman with the baby face, and made-up eyes. And powder. She was powdered that day. Tawdry? She had thought so. And down here—where? In some farm or inn? "I love you, Priscilla, I adore you." How absurd! Men were absurd. . . .

She was striving to keep it a trivial thing, a thing of no great importance; her mind worked in little surface jerks over deep feeling, a storm of repugnance. . . .

"I found out by accident. I listened. It was a horrible thing to do. I must forget it. It may mean very little—a flirtation. . . ."

She wrestled for a long while, reiterating the same surface trivialities again and again, till her mind was too tired for any storm, and she fell asleep. But before she slept came the repulsive thought: "It is like Dick and me. Dick must go."

And so it was that she would not be gainsaid, and Dick went.

## CHAPTER XIX

THE days passed quietly in a continual soft grey mist: Brent worked at his book. Philippa felt a curious lassitude; it was as if she were waiting, as if a pause had come in her life. She found herself saying one day: "When this mist goes, something will happen."

When she woke one day to sunshine she lay and remembered her thought. What happened was that there was a long letter from Dick: she accepted and read it with a superstitious sense of fatality. She had told him he was not to write unless he could write as he had been wont to do, with no suggestion of his new madness. His letter was a long worship of her, and glorying in his love. She took it out, and sat on the cliff, staring out at the sea, with the letter in her lap. She was not angry, only very thoughtful: she strove to think out a new thought, it was long and deep, and very new to her.

This love of Dick's—was it a foolishness, a madness? A thing cruel and to be crushed? Was it rather a beautiful thing, a thing to help and guide him through his life, or so long as it should last? . . .

Her eyes glanced down, now and again, and caught sentences:

"It has made such a difference in my life, it's as if the whole world is bathed in sunshine."

And then:

"I ask nothing, my dearest, nothing but your dear friendship. With that I can face the world and fight it. With that I can paint as I've never painted before."

And again:

"It has given me a curious new sense of power. And things don't worry and irritate as they used to do. . . ."

This love then surely was a fine thing? And there was no hint of tragedy. Why, after all, should there be? The tragedy of her mother's love had been in the daily living of her life with her husband. Dick's love would remain always a dream; for him, in this love of his there would be nothing of the terror that for herself she had always feared. How should there be? . . .

She leant her chin on her hands and gazed dreamily out over the sea. The gloom that had lain in her eyes lately had gone: she was conscious of a deep sense of soothing. It was good of Dick to love her like that, she thought, with a curious restless gratitude to him. . . .

She was made aware of Brent's approach by the thumping of Rose's tail. An instinctive movement towards the open letter in her lap was checked at once, but she could not stay the deepening colour in her cheek.

"Did you want me?" she said.

Brent sat down on the rock beside her.

"I wanted the air and sea," he said.

They were silent.

"That's a long letter from Dick," he said.

"Yes, four sheets."

"May I read it?"

"Why should you?"

"No reason at all. I was interested, that's all."

She slowly folded the sheets of paper, and put them into the envelope. Then she rose.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going back now."

"Why?"

"I've some things to do."

"Dick's letter to answer?"

"That amongst other things."

"You're afraid of me, Philippa."

She paused, looking back at him with burning eyes.

"I'm not."

"Now—be careful. You're a truthful little girl as a rule."

She stared back into his mocking face, and she said a strange thing.

"You want to irritate me into going—and I won't go!"

He rose to his feet, and for a moment she saw surprise in his eyes, then he smiled courteously.

"Leave me altogether? Oh no, Philippa, I don't want you to do that."

Her gaze had gone past him, and was fixed on the approaching figure of a woman. He turned and glanced over his shoulder, then turned back to her.

"Why should you think I want you to go? I will walk home with you."

A curious expression sparkled in her eyes.

"I'm not going home. I'm going this way."

She turned and took a few steps towards the slight figure coming slowly along the foot-path: she looked back at him over her shoulder.

"Are you coming?"

"Yes."

He caught her up, and walked beside her.

"You haven't told me why you thought I want you to leave me, Philippa?"

She answered with some light evasion, striving to keep her voice steady: her pulses were leaping with a curious, vindictive excitement: she hardly heard what he was saying in that cool voice of his—"too valuable a housekeeper"; "difficult to find anyone so willing to put up with the dullness"—things like that he was saying, and the woman—the woman in the large hat and the ridiculous shoes was drawing nearer and nearer on the narrow foot-path; she was so near now that there was a gleam of golden hair—and now the upward sweep of the long dark lashes—and then—a slight smile and bow to Philippa—and she had passed.

Brent's voice had not paused, he had been saying some-

thing about the fishing, and as he had lifted his hat in response to her bow to Philippa, his voice had not paused or altered. Philippa looked at him—his face had not altered either. A fury possessed her, drove her into unconsidered speech.

"You know her! Why do you pretend you do not know her?"

"The lady who just passed us? Are you jealous, my dear?"

The sneer in his voice made her cold: she spoke icily.

"Don't try to be witty, Michael, it doesn't suit you."

"I won't then," he said.

They walked on in silence.

"I think I ought to tell you that I overheard you and—and that woman—talking one night in the copse——"

"Oh! Are you sure it wasn't looney Billy?"

"Yes. I heard your voice. I heard what you said."

"And what did I say?"

" 'My dear child, it's so wet, I'm afraid of your catching cold' "—the tremendous effort she had to make to keep the vulgarity of an exaggerated imitation out of her voice made it hard and clear.

"Not particularly brilliant. Is that all?"

"Yes."

"A ghost might surely say that much to Mary."

"I heard her answer. I recognised her voice. I had met her one day. She was that woman who has just passed."

"That's what you think? I see."

When she spoke again, she had had time to remember a small thing.

"Rose knew her too," she said, speaking on the memory. "She wagged her tail, and went up to her."

"Did she? She's a wonderful colour in the sun."

Philippa paused at the branching out of another footpath.

"I'm going up that way," she said. "I shan't be back for lunch."

"I'll come too. I feel like a good walk."

"I want to be alone."

"Why?"

"Am I bound to give a reason?"

"Well, I think so. Suppose I had intended to ask your advice about a re-arrangement of my study?"

"Then—I want to be rid of you."

He looked at her steadily.

"That is hardly a sufficient reason surely?"

"It should be—to a man with any decent feeling."

"Oh, but I don't pretend to aspire to anything as high as that. All the decent feeling in me has got choked."

Her white face turned on him, at bay.

"You *cannot* mean to force yourself on me like that!"

He moved a step away.

"I was only teasing you, child," he said gently. "There, go and get your walk, and put some colour into your cheeks."

He swung off down the slope, along the way they had come.

Philippa climbed the footpath, blinded with sudden tears.

## CHAPTER XX

She wrote to Dick that day; an ingenuous letter it was that drew from him a rhapsodical many-sheeted answer: long it was too, since there were so many things to say, and so much advice to convey as gently as possible. There recurred frequently the maternal note, as in the admonition: "You must not give way to it, Dick. I want for you a happy love with a happy wife and home."

And again: "I feel so much older than you. You are, after all, only a boy, and this love of which you write will cool into a deep friendship for your Aunt Philippa."

She was pleased with that last: she brought in the relationship several times with a deep cunning. At times she scolded, as—"All this talk is stupid and wrong, Dick. I like things to be clear and straight. You must *not* write to me unless you can keep all that sort of stuff out of your letters."

And then her heart grew soft with memory and gratitude. "Oh, Dick, don't think me hard and horrid. It is so terrible to think that *I* have brought this horrible thing on you. I, of all people! After what you did for me! You can't stop me now with 'Gaily the Troubadour,' so I can say how I never forget, and never shall forget."

And finally she was abrupt: "Make up your mind to put it behind you. Write ordinarily to me. Let me have news and nothing else."

And then squeezed in up the side of the sheet: "Oh, I do so want you to be happy, Dick!"

An ingenuous letter which called forth a reply that left her a little breathless, quite unable to think clearly. A keen resentment there was that she should, involuntarily and inevitably, experience a sense almost of guilt as she

read the long rhapsody of devotion. This resentment took shape, unfairly enough, in an intense irritation with Brent. When she returned from a long walk during which she had striven in vain to determine on a calm and clear course, Brent's cool, and to her nervous fancy, amused gaze infuriated her to a pitch of which she was ashamed. The shame added to her irritation: she thought oddly: "I should like to hurt him—physically." A memory of her mother came to her: she saw a patch of sunlight on the faded carpet in her mother's bedroom, saw herself creeping after a tiny beetle that was crossing it, felt her grief when she found that, seizing it too eagerly, she had crushed it. And then her mother's deep voice: "A pity. It isn't insects or animals we want to kill," and blurred through tears she saw her mother's hands outstretched, the long brown fingers working: "I've known the longing to have them round a man's throat—to crush and squeeze——"

She looked across at Brent sitting opposite her at the table: the sun caught his glass of ale, shone on his fork, on his smooth hair. She shivered.

"Cold?"

She shook her head.

"A memory—my mother. She would have killed you before now."

"Really? For any particular reason?"

"For your cool conceit and insolence."

The words—there had been a biting intensity about them, they had taken the place unconsciously of her mother's more primitive hands—the words seemed to echo round the room for a while, then Brent spoke.

"I am sorry you should say that. The conceit—well, that is a mere matter of opinion, but the insolence—Have I really been insolent to you?"

"Yes."

"I am very sorry. Will you tell me when?"

She was silent, baulked, at a loss: why hadn't he shown fight? She said helplessly, grown listless:

"Oh, what does it matter?"

"It matters a good deal to me," he answered quietly.

"Well, it doesn't to me."

He looked at her coldly, compellingly.

"It seemed to matter, since you were wishing you could use your mother's methods, and put an end to me."

"Don't speak of my mother like that! How—how *dare* you speak of her like that?"

"I'm sorry, child," he said gently. "I meant no disrespect. You should know that."

"How can I know? You might mean anything, for all I know."

"Will you tell me when I have been insolent to you?"

"No: it's too much trouble."

He did not reply.

"Won't you have some more cheese?" she said.

"Thank you."

Hot words in a neat handwriting danced before her eyes—"'This horrible thing!' Oh, Phil, how can you? Beautiful rather, inspiring! All beautiful, since I ask nothing of you except that you inspire my life—my work!"

Brent's cool voice broke in:

"What are you thinking about, Philippa?"

The awful, hot flush rising over her face, her brow, her very neck! She felt it, quivering, but her eyes met his, and did not fall.

"Of love," she said, as unexpectedly to herself as to him.

He raised his eyebrows.

"I thought you didn't believe in love," he said quickly.

"Did you? You must think me a very particular sort of fool then."

He did not reply for a little while, then he said quietly:

"It is your own power of love you do not believe in?"

There was a silence: her eyes, wide, dark, met his; the truth was dragged from her lips.

"I believe in it so strongly that I dread its coming to me."

He looked away from her.

"Yes. You married me to keep it away."

"I told you. I tried to tell you. I thought you had done with it——" her voice was stifled.

"Don't reproach yourself, child. I knew what I was doing. I'm a good many years older than you."

A broken cry came from her, bursting from her throat without warning.

"Michael, I wish I hadn't married you!"

He pushed his chair back, and came round to her side.

"Don't you worry, little girl. You shall be happy soon. Shall I tell you a story?"

His hands were on her shoulders: she bent back her head and looked up at him: there was in her face an emotion that made it strangely beautiful.

"Can't we be friends, Michael?"

He stared at her a moment, then dropped his hands, and turned away.

"You've grown so irritable, my dear, lately. I'm rather afraid I'm not sufficiently saintly——"

He did not finish his sentence, and Philippa sat silent, absently giving Rose biscuits from the table. Words in Dick's handwriting flared up again: "You are like a dove to me, so gentle, so soft——"

A queer spasm of laughter shook her throat: she thought that rather funny, had thought so when she read it. Quick resentment followed the involuntary thought of Brent's amusement could he have seen those words: after all, they were no more foolish than "I love you, Priscilla, I adore you," and Dick was so much younger. . . .

"Why do you object to Rose's sniffing at the door of the closed wing?"

The words, abrupt, startlingly unexpected to herself hung on the air with a curious warlike suggestion. Philippa, while she awaited his answer, had time to wonder what was governing her speech that afternoon.

He did not deny the objecting: he replied uninterestedly.

"A fad. Perhaps I think she will worry the ghosts."

"I believe," she rested her elbows on the table and her chin in her hands, she spoke slowly, her eyes on his face, "I believe you keep something in there that you don't want me to see."

"Priscilla, perhaps, eh?"

She did not make a direct reply, beyond a sharp indrawn breath.

"I want to see that wing."

He smiled.

"Naturally."

"Why—naturally?"

"Your sex, my dear."

"How trite you are sometimes, Michael, you deal out little platitudes with a smug air of originality that's very funny."

"These biscuits are not quite crisp. Well, there's a certain amount of old, safe truth in a good many platitudes, Philippa."

She wondered with passionate resentment why she could never touch him even to a pin-prick. She knew that he was the very opposite of a platitudinal man: why then not resent the imputation? And at the back of it, there was the curious thought—would it have hurt him if the golden-haired woman had said it?

"It's so absurd not to be allowed to go into those rooms."

"A condition with the lease. Why not write to the owner? I believe I've his address somewhere."

"Of course you have his address: how could you pay the rent otherwise?"

"Into his bank."

"Mary's allowed in."

"Very much allowed, not to say encouraged: she spends any amount of time in there. It's my belief she has a flirtation on hand with poor Billy."

"Perhaps that's what she wanted all that blue ribbon for!" Philippa burst out.

"My dear!"

"Don't be s-stupid, Michael!" She struggled, then laughed. "Mary!" she said.

He rose.

"I shan't want you this afternoon."

"I'm glad. I shall watch and wait, and see if I can't get into that wing somehow."

"As you will."

He went into his study and closed the door.

Philippa wandered about the hall, and opening the door, stood looking out. The air was beautiful and fresh, gently sun-warmed; over the tree-tops mist hung, thin, rolling away, flecked with sunshine. The sound of the sea on the rocks came to her softly, peacefully. . . .

Rose bobbed in the path, curling like an eel, bowing, growling deliriously at her. Philippa smiled. "Very well, we'll go out again."

Presently as she went down the drive Brent's voice pursued her.

"Deserted the forbidden wing?"

She turned frowning.

"It isn't an afternoon for poking and prying."

His reply surprised her.

"It never would be, I think, for you."

She stood a minute, looking at the empty window: he had gone back to his writing. She said almost loudly: "I'm not as straight as you think. I'm letting Dick write love-letters to me."

It seemed to her that the words hung in the very mist, quivered in the sunshine: she felt suddenly very tired and very apathetic: she knew without doubt what she must write to Dick: as she walked on down the drive, the words of her letter formed in her mind. "I cannot argue about right and wrong. I only know I hate it. You mustn't write to me again until you can write a letter that is honestly and truly what friend writes to friend."

Priggish? Yes, she thought there was a priggish

flavour about it. Yet she could not help that, nor did it really matter. The thing that really mattered was that she should say this thing to Dick, and at once: the manner of its saying was surely immaterial, so long as she conveyed her meaning clearly. A feverish restlessness came upon her: the need to get her letter written at once became imperative: she turned back, and went rapidly up the drive again, and re-entered the house. She ran lightly up the stairs: as she reached the top of the first flight she heard the click of a door closing in the corridor that led to the south wing: she turned swiftly, and was face to face with Brent. She stood a moment looking at him: he returned her gaze, then turned and locked the door which he had just closed—the door of the south wing. Afterwards, reflecting with bitter shame, she thought she must have gone mad then: she did not remember the surging of the impulse, had no memory of forming even a vague idea of what she did next; she only knew that she had done it, that, madly, wildly, inexcusably she had flung herself upon him as he turned back with the key in his hand, fought him for possession of it. Hardly fought, since he had held her off so easily, but struggled and striven, till his voice—different from any she had heard from him—"My child—my child—don't do that. You can have the key——" and the cold feeling of the key pressed into her hot hand. What had she done then? She thought she had flung it from her—yes, she remembered the sound of its falling with a thud on the floor—and then she had turned and fled to her bedroom.

She had pleaded a headache and had not gone down to tea or dinner: she reflected with a certain bitterness on the hopeless femininity of the excuse, but told herself that she had proved herself to belong to the least desirable, most hysterical of her sex, and need not trouble to find other reason for her non-appearance. She derived a sort of negative pleasure from writing her letter to Dick: she worded it a little more baldly, a little more coldly than she had meant to do, since it hurt her to do it, and she wanted

to hurt herself. For her heart went out to Dick with sick longing: the thought of his happy, boyish face recurred to her again and again: she thought that surely, if he could have come to her, his presence would drive these black thoughts away. She was conscious of a deep, a desperate depression: she told herself that, had she been superstitious she would have thought something terrible was going to happen.

In the morning she remembered this, and wondered if Brent's cruel beating of the lurcher had been the thing she had felt hanging over her. For it was a terrible thing in her eyes, and it seemed to take from him, in some subtle way, what she had thought an essential part of him.

When she had met him, crop in hand, on her way to the stables, she had flung out an accusing: "You lost your temper!"

He had acknowledged it, and the dark flush that rose to his forehead had accented the acknowledgment in a way that was painful, but was not spared by the clear, ruthless young eyes on his face.

She had gone on out to the stables, from where had come the pitiful howls, and the sound of the crop falling with unmerciful force, and kneeling beside Rose in a passion of pity had wondered were all men brutes. . . .

The boy Willie who came every day to pump up water had stood and watched her sullenly.

"Didn't she try to bite him, Willie? Why didn't she bite him, I wonder?"

The boy did not reply.

"What had she done? Why did your master beat her?"

"She hadn't done nothing: he beat her cruel, he did."

Draggingly she said:

"I suppose she had to be beaten," trying, against heart and conscience, to exonerate Michael in this boy's eyes.

But Willie merely repeated:

"He beat her cruel. I'll not be coming down along no more."

Sick at heart, she knelt in the straw and heard his foot-

steps retreat down the yard; the click of the gate, footsteps in the lane. . . .

The shame of it!

"Rose, does it hurt much? Oh, poor, poor little girl!"

When from the house the gong summoned her she went in and up to her room and finished the dressing that had been interrupted by the commotion from the stables. She breakfasted alone: Michael had finished, and left the room when she came down. She construed it into a disinclination to meet her just then, but was in no wise softened. She went to him presently in the study.

"Michael, aren't you going to send for the vet. for Rose?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"There is nothing for him to do. She'll be all right."

There was a pause: she was perfectly well aware that no vet. was needed, but she wanted to hurt him. When she spoke her voice was cutting.

"You need not tell him that *you* whipped her. I will not give you away."

He looked up at her from the book he was studying, but he did not say anything. She flung out disgustedly:

"I shall send for him myself!"

"Very well."

"Wouldn't you be ashamed?"

"Why should I be?"

"You know! You ought to go and beg Rose's forgiveness!"

"You are talking childishly, Philippa. I want to do some writing. I shall not need you this morning."

She left the room and went back to the stables. Rose came to meet her, a little stiff perhaps and rather more apologetic than usual, but with her spirits as high as ever, and, as she presently showed, her appetite unimpaired. Philippa decided that she could not send for the vet., even to hurt Brent further.

## CHAPTER XXI

THE next morning the postman brought a telegram for Brent with the letters. Mary took it into the study and presently emerged. "There's no answer, postman."

Philippa stood looking at the study door: she thought that nothing would have surprised her: had Brent come out with the information that Dick had told him by wire of his love, she thought she would have felt no surprise. Her nerves were strung dangerously high: she found herself starting at quite familiar sounds, listening always, waiting. At the back of her mind she knew there was a question waiting to be answered; she fought realisation of it; veiled it restlessly with a thousand other thoughts, and the strain told on her.

After a little while Brent did emerge from the study, but with no more startling information than the expected arrival that evening of an old friend.

"You have heard me speak of Andrew Carniford. He has helped me sometimes in my work."

"He cruised to the Baltic Sea with you."

"Yes, he did. Will you see that the room Dick had is got ready for him?"

He turned back to the study.

"He can have the room Anne had," Philippa said slowly.

Brent paused.

"Why?"

"It's larger."

"And damper. He's not a young man and suffers from asthma. Dick's room will be better."

She went up to Dick's room: the aspect of it was changed

subtly for her: it did not speak now of painting only, she seemed to see the result of his thought of her in it. Slowly she moved about picking up a paint-brush here and there, a tie, a piece of paint rag; then she went and gave orders to Mary. She wished vaguely that Michael's friend was not coming: she wondered if Michael had sent for him: she questioned him listlessly at lunch.

"How old is he?"

"About sixty-five, I think."

"Is he nice?"

"I don't think I quite know the definition of the word used like that. He's a good old sort, with a very soft heart, and he's clever. He's written a good deal. And he's very fond of me, if that is a recommendation."

"I wish the wind would stop howling," Philippa said.

"March gales coming before their time."

"It's only the beginning of February. Shall you want me this afternoon, Michael?"

"No, thank you."

"I think I shall go for a walk."

"It will be a struggle in this gale."

"I can go and watch the sea: it should be glorious."

"There won't be much of a sea on: the wind's over the land, and it's not high water till about seven this evening."

She felt an irrational irritation with him and his knowledge.

"I shall go all the same. Why shouldn't I?"

He raised his eyebrows.

"Why shouldn't you indeed? Put on a rain-coat; I think we shall have rain before long."

"With this wind?"

"Yes."

When the rain came down she gazed frowning, up at the grey skies: he was right, as usual. But she went on, fighting her way, glad, with a subtle inner relief, that the wind should buffet and beat her, till it seemed to beat out thought;

glad that it should weary her, glad that it should make fighting necessary before she could make headway against it. When at last she got back to the house she was tired with a sort of comfortable lassitude, her mind was contentedly empty, no thought seemed important beyond the comfort of her chair and cushions. The wind had whipped colour into her pale cheeks; the glory of the fight had brightened her eyes. When Andrew Carniford arrived he blinked with shy admiration upon her from behind his spectacles: his hand-grasp was full of friendliness.

Philippa decided lazily that she liked him, and that she never would have thought he was clever. She found him a guest easy to please: he enjoyed his dinner with a simple pleasure: he laughed with a contagious giggle at her smallest witticism, his round blue eyes beaming upon her and Brent.

Nevertheless she found it hard as the evening wore on to stifle her yawns; the wind had made her sleepy, and the little man, with the best will in the world, bored her.

At ten o'clock Brent said:

"Why don't you go to bed, Philippa? You're tired."

"I don't want to go yet."

"You needn't fear that Carniford will be hurt. He's longing to have a talk with me."

"Oh, really—really, Mike—I am enjoying myself so thoroughly——"

"But THE WORK, Mr. Carniford," her voice broke in sarcastically. "You forget its importance. Michael will be hurt if you put off its discussion. I'll go to bed. Goodnight."

"Philippa, a minute. Do you remember whether it was from the first or second volume of Dickson's 'Yacht Architecture' that you copied out that extract about masts the other day?"

She turned and looked at him over her shoulder.

"I forget," she said curtly.

"We will search for it," Andrew Carniford, holding open

the door, spoke reassuringly. "Don't you trouble, Mrs. Brent, we will find it."

Brent spoke quietly and unexpectedly.

"Philippa would not grudge any trouble to help me with my writing. She never has."

Colour flashed into her face, she looked at him, startled.

"Michael, let me look through the volumes!"

"My dear child, it might take you all night."

She stood, thinking.

"On the next page to the extract there was a story about a man sailing a boat single-handed, and frying bacon in a gale. I looked on and saw it."

"You have solved it then—it's the second volume. That's Mullinford, in the Seagull. I remember."

She stood hesitating.

"Then there's nothing for me to do?"

"Nothing. I know the very chapter now. Fine chap. We'll go into the study, Carniford."

She went slowly up the stairs: a deep depression had descended upon her again: she thought morbidly: "Am I going to die to-night?" She turned and looked down on the two men entering the study: her eyes fixed themselves on Brent. Andrew Carniford turned and smiled up at her as he went into the study. She went on up to her room. "I shall never go to sleep to-night," was her thought, but almost as she lay down she fell asleep.

## CHAPTER XXII

AFTERWARDS she wondered that she had had no premonition that next morning. She had felt as she had been wont to feel these last days, restless, striving to stave off thought; at the back of her mind the unasked question trying to form itself, to pierce through the veil of restless thought with which she strove to hide and strangle it. She had felt an intense irritation with the wind. In the morning she performed her light duties, and wandered idly about the house, too tired to go out and face the never-ceasing wind. At lunch she had thought their guest looking pale: he owned to a touch of asthma, was afraid the place did not agree with him, but asked to be allowed to accompany her when she said she should go for a walk.

They set out, talking commonplaces, the wind buffeting them and carrying their words away as they left their lips. This irritated her: she found it, after awhile, unbearable to have to repeat a remark about the weather or the landscape four or five times. She fell silent, and presently it struck her that her companion was silent also, would have been silent from the first had he not been obliged to reply to her remarks. It surprised her, since last night she had thought him a talkative little man. She stole a glance at him, found him pale, perturbed. Was she walking too fast? She slackened her steps.

"We shall soon be at the top of the hill."

"I beg your pardon?"

"We shall soon be at the top of the hill."

"I'm afraid—er——"

"Oh, nothing!" She tried to soften it with a smile and a shrug.

They came out at the top of the hill upon the cliffs: she made her way to a mass of huge boulders, and stood, sheltered a little from the wind.

"Now we can hear each other speak. Isn't it a marvellous view from here?"

He looked out across the sweep of dead bracken, tall grasses, and grey rock, across the green-grey sea, to the wonderful misty blur of delicate colour on the other side of the bay.

"Marvellous indeed," he said.

She was pushing back stray bits of hair with an impatient hand.

"A man can never know one of the most irritating things of life: when a piece of hair comes out again and again—worrying—Rose doesn't like this sort of day."

Something made her hurry on in her speech, and then suddenly she halted.

"Don't you feel well?" she said quietly.

"Me? Oh yes, thank you. Beyond a touch of asthma——"

"Ought you to be out in this mist? And climbing——"

"I wanted to talk to you."

"Yes?"

Premonition touched her now: a queer fear seemed to grip her heart; she turned her head and looked out rather wildly over the grey and green waters.

"Yes?" she said again.

Andrew Carniford took off his hat, put it on, then removed his glasses and polished them. She waited till he had fixed them again upon his nose.

"You wanted to talk to me? Now? Here?"

"I—er—would sooner get it over out here somehow. You have been so kind a hostess to me in the house——" his hurried words stopped with a quick asthmatical indrawing of his breath.

All her restlessness had gone: she seemed possessed of an infinite patience: she helped him quite gently.

"Is it about Michael?"

"Yes—yes—he has asked me to tell you——"

"Why doesn't he tell me himself?"

"I think he is ashamed."

The words—curiously simple and bare—were taken by the wind, and it seemed to her that they were buffeted and beaten against the waves. Shame and Michael were difficult to think of in conjunction one with the other. He had never seemed ashamed, even of his cruel punishment of Rose. This then was a much bigger thing. She tried to focus her mind on what was to be told her, but she found herself swept along on a flood of pity. Michael to be ashamed! The thought hurt, stung her to a curious indignation against the man at her side. Michael and shame! Oh, cruel! Cruel! Michael to be ashamed. . . .

"Go on!" she said curtly.

"It is a difficult story to tell you—a most unpleasant task—I would give much to be spared it——"

His nervousness, his shrinking and distaste, appeared to her entirely beside the question; they were annoying, almost ridiculous. She said harshly:

"Yes. Please tell me what you have to say straight out."

"It will sound—a—a brutal story, I am afraid, told like that——"

His words died into a mumble.

"The manner of telling cannot alter the facts. Please go on."

"Certainly no one knows . . . comfort . . . men . . . deplorable——" The wind shrieked round the boulders, took his stammering words from his lips, howled in her ears. She shouted:

"Speak louder! I can't hear!"

He stood helplessly silent, shaking his head. So they waited for the gust to wear itself out: the force of it died down, it sobbed itself out, whistled sadly round the boulders.

"Now," she said curtly.

"No one knows. That is my one comfort. And men have these deplorable lapses—quite decent, kindly men, only not—not so—cold blooded—and *Mike*——"

He stopped: her eyes were on his face, watching lest the wind should take one word from her.

"You mean——" the rest of the sentence she choked back. She had been going to mention the woman with the golden hair, but this new queer fierce loyalty to Michael stopped her. She looked out across the bay, one hand dragging the beautiful green moss from the boulder beside her. Something within her seemed to sob as the wind was sobbing. . . .

She turned her eyes again to the poor pathetic face on a level almost with her own; she met his frightened, apologetic gaze.

"I wish you would go on!"

"Oh, yes, yes, I am giving you unnecessary pain, only I hope—it is my great hope—that there will be no great pain for you, indignation—anger—the sense of having been outraged, but no deeper pain such as there would be if you—you—had a deep affection——"

His voice died again into a nervous mumble, which the wind took and tossed brokenly, meaninglessly about the rocks.

"Please speak louder. And I would prefer—— Is there any necessity to dissect my probable feelings?"

"No—no, of course not. Oh, my dear child, I am so distressed I do not know what I am saying!"

From a height of indifferent, world-old pity she stooped at last to comfort him.

"Please don't be so upset. It is hard on you, but as you say, I shall probably not suffer much, beyond a hurt to my pride."

He drew a great breath of relief.

"The way to hurt me least is to tell me what you have to say, straight out, and as quickly as possible."

"Yes, yes, I see, I know. I quite understand!" A

gust of wind rushed at them noisily round the boulder: with a queer inadequate gesture she flung out her arm to push it from them: it stopped the work in hand: she waited for its lulling, her brows knit in an intensity of impatience.

Again she urged him cuttly.

"Now!"

"You are not Mike's wife."

She put her hand up to her forehead.

"The wind—this terrible wind!" she said.

He stared at her miserably.

"Didn't you hear? Must I say it again?" he groaned.

Her hand dropped: she faced him.

"Yes, I heard. You said that I am not Michael's wife."

"No. That's it. It was a sham form of marriage in that room—in his friend's flat. Oh, it was an iniquitous thing. He is a scoundrel!"

That arrested her: she became conscious for a minute of the little man and his excited, distorted face. It seemed odd—Michael a scoundrel. And this man had the right to call him so? Yes, it was odd.

Beside her the nervous voice with the asthmatical catch in it murmured the sort of things that did not count: she heard them, it seemed as if the very wind had paused to listen.

"No one will know. There is at least that—he has kept it very secret. And you have only been his housekeeper, of course——"

That mattered. Suddenly, shaking with the knowledge from head to foot, she knew that that was what mattered—she had been only his housekeeper. That mattered. Nothing else. With a sudden wild gesture she flung out her arms to the great grey sea, one word broke whisperingly, broken from her lips: "Michael!"

"I thank God for that, that your reputation will not be hurt. I do hope you realise that. No one can know, and you are absolutely free from any blame. . . ."

After a while she became conscious again of the poor babbler at her side.

"Why?"

"Because you had no idea, of course, that you were not lawfully married, you——"

He looked away from the curious expression in her eyes; they made him feel as if he were a lunatic.

"Why did he pretend to marry me?"

"Oh,—oh, that. It is difficult to explain to a young girl. Mike is such a good sort, but he—he is like that—and the idea of any sort of bondage is abhorrent to him. You—I understand—were going to wed a Professor?"

"Yes."

"And he—he had a great admiration for you——"

"No."

"I beg your pardon?"

"It doesn't matter. Go on."

"And he was jealous. So he pretended to marry you, and brought you down here, meaning to—to make love to you—I hope I am not coarse—it is such an extremely delicate——"

"Need you mind that the facts are naked life? Please don't try to drape them."

He was very much distressed, but she had no pity for him: she could not remember that he was alive, with feelings to be hurt, and all sorts of shy, old-fashioned prejudices to be trampled upon.

"He never made love to me," she prompted coldly. "Go on."

"No; because—he—he met—oh dear, it's a cruel thing——"

She had made a swift movement.

"He met another woman—a woman called Priscilla—with gold hair and dark eyes——"

"You have seen her! How? I thought it was extraordinarily wonderful that she could have remained hidden in that wing——"

"She has been living in those rooms? I see."

She stood staring out over the sea: she wished sharply that Rose would leave off whimpering.

"Go and find a rabbit," she said. "Look for them, Rose."

Andrew Carniford drew another great breath: she was much less affected than he had feared she would be. He ceased his nervous babbling, and stood silent.

She turned to him again.

"Why so long? Why hasn't he let me know this before?"

He began his nervous fidgetting again.

"Well, you see—you—you——. I understand that there were times when he could not quite make up his mind which —er—er——"

"Which of us he preferred."

"Er—yes, or rather he could not make up his mind to let you go. I understand he sometimes found—er—you attractive——"

"Once," she said. A faint colour flickered in her white face: her mind went back to that morning in the study.

"And now he has decided definitely that he wants to get rid of me?"

"Oh, my dear young lady! Oh, really——"

"Can't you ever stop capering, and be honest? I want to understand quite clearly. Now, please listen. Rose, be quiet! *Be quiet!*" She put her hand to her forehead for a moment, then began in a clear voice:

"He had a sort of fancy for me—not strong enough to be worth binding himself for—so pretended to marry me, rather than let the Professor do it. He brought me down here. When did he meet that woman?"

"Very shortly after your arrival here."

"And when did he install her in those rooms? Is that a made up story too? The ghosts?"

"No: that is true. I do not know the exact date. It was a queer idea of his, but the—the woman refused to stay

down here—she was uncomfortable in some inn. She said she had no fear of ghosts. He bribed poor Mary heavily—oh, he has acted as I never would have thought he could act! Our friendship can never be the same again—He is a scoundrel——!"

"And now he wants me to go. The woman with the golden hair has won. I said she had charm. I haven't."

The words to him sounded coarse; their harsh echo seemed to linger distressingly; the wind took them and flung them in his face.

She gave a little laugh.

"I can't understand his hesitating so long—that's all. Shall we go back now?"

He stared at her blankly.

"Go back? But, my dear young lady, you—you——"

"I must pack."

"That could be done for you. I—I had thought—a train to—somewhere—it will hurt your purity, your pride to breathe the same air——"

She turned on him whitely furious.

"You fool! Be quiet. I would stay on as his housekeeper if he would have me!"

The words seemed to strike him dumb: he ambled along beside her in silence, his lips working nervously. She did not speak again till they were entering the drive. Then she said tonelessly:

"I am sorry, I have been rude to you. You had a horrid thing to do."

She did not listen to his protestations, and at last, in silence, they entered the hall. She went straight to the stairs, and suddenly everything was blurred before her eyes. She looked back into the hall—the tea-table stood before the fire, there were the chocolate cakes of which Michael was so fond: she looked at the closed study door, and she knew that she loved it with all the wide-spreading shoots of her love for Brent. She went up to her room, and sat down before the window. The mist had left her eyes: she did

not cry. She kept thinking: "I must pack." She felt very tired. Once she said to herself: "How lazy I am. I must pack."

Mary came in presently with a tray.

"Your tea, Ma'am."

Philippa stared at her, wrinkling her brow. What was it Mary had done?

"Weren't you jealous lest she should meet looney Billy, Mary?" she said, and a little laugh escaped her pale lips.

"Can I do anything for you, Ma'am?" Mary said staidly.

Philippa stared at her oddly, a thought trying to shape itself in her mind, it uttered itself disconnectedly, as her brain conceived it, and she gave it up wearily.

"I shouldn't have thought—it seems—so queer—you, Mary—shocked—that's what I should have thought you'd be—you're so respectable——"

Mary repeated: "Can I do anything for you, Ma'am?"

"No, thank you, Mary. I must pack presently."

Mary left the room; came back to say: "May I light your candles, Ma'am?"

"No, thank you, Mary."

Mary went away.

Philippa sat on by the window, staring out: she felt very cold and dull. She thought: "I've a bad cold coming. I must pack."

Once glancing down she saw that she still held a piece of moss in her clenched hand. "I pulled it off the rock," she thought, and dropped it out of the window.

Once a sharp thought darted across the dullness; it was the question that had lurked and worried those last days: now it flashed piercingly clear: "Why don't you go away?" And the answer was as clear: "Because I couldn't live away from Michael."

Yes, that was the question, and that the answer. She knew it now. And now she had to go away, and live away. She must pack presently. Her mind groped, trying to

picture living away from Michael, but it failed to see it. She said: "People live without arms and legs, and without minds. I suppose it will be rather like that." But she knew it wouldn't be like that; it would be worse than that.

A voice babbled at her ear: "Indignation—anger—the sense of having been outraged——"

What had he meant? Anger—yes, of course Michael was a scoundrel—that babbling voice had said so——. Outraged—yes, she had been cruelly insulted. . . .

How she had failed! Only once had he wanted to kiss her. She was lacking in all charm. Why had she fought him then? Why had she always been disagreeable—irritable——?

Thought crowded now, sharp and poignant. Suppose she had tried to win him? Suppose——.

She rose hurriedly, lit the candles on the dressing-table, and peered at herself in the glass. A white face peered back, straining eyes beneath frowning brows—— She recoiled, her hands clenched.

"I am glad—glad I am ugly! A love like his—the terrible insult of it!"

What was it he had done? She pressed her hands to her aching eyes. Michael? A dastardly thing like that. Michael? Were men like that? Surely no one else would be so cold-bloodedly wicked?

So far her thought went clearly, then her brain grew numb again. "I must pack," was her thought.

Rose came scratching at the door for admittance. Philippa went to the door and let her in. Rose trotted to the table, and sat down staring at the tea-tray.

"Rose, I am going away. I must take you back to your people. Come."

She gave her the bread and butter and cake. "Come, Rose."

She went downstairs. Brent was in the hall alone, standing by the fire. She saw him, and stood still, looking down on him. Her heart was thudding in her ears, thought

whirled in her brain confusedly. He was a scoundrel. Michael. He had done a terrible thing. Yes, deceived her, tricked her. A mean thing. He was all false. Michael. Her eyes were on his face, meeting his eyes; she saw him standing there, as usual. He had on a green tie she had given him. He looked pale and very clean—cleaner than that little man who had babbled somehow——. She knew that if she drew closer he would smell of soap and cold water. Michael. And he—what was he? A scoundrel.

Her voice broke into the silence.

"Michael, it isn't true——"

And back to her his answer came.

"Yes, it's true enough."

So it was real—this thing. How queer that was. Michael—standing there as usual, wearing the green tie she had given him—was a villain—no, a scoundrel—a scoundrel was what the babbling voice had called him.

Another voice had said once—long ago: "That man—Field—who murdered his wife, and had murdered his first wife too. His great hobby was gardening—flowers——"

Who had said that? And what did it mean? Oh, because Michael was fond of the sea and sailing. Was that it? She said to him:

"I suppose you are like that man—Field."

"Probably, if he's a beast."

"Yes, that's it."

She stood still on the stairs; she had not remembered to move.

"Where are you going?"

She remembered then.

"I am going to take Rose back. And then I must pack."

"It's dark," he said.

She did not reply. Brent went into the study, and presently Andrew Carniford joined her in the drive.

"I know my presence must be disagreeable to you, but

Mike insisted. I know you would sooner be alone, and there is a bright moon. Would you prefer me to walk behind you?"

"If you like," she said politely.

"It's hardly a question of liking, is it? If you will allow me to walk beside you I shall be very grateful. I have never passed such a terrible day in my life. And I am so fond of Mike——"

"When you're on the sea—with it all round you, and in you—it must feel very bad to be a scoundrel, don't you think?" she said unexpectedly.

"Eh? Oh—yes, yes—terrible—terrible indeed."

"Like being before God—the sea is God, don't you think? A scoundrel would feel mean and shrinking and dirty, wouldn't he?"

"Yes—yes—undoubtedly—— You are thinking of forgiveness? You will forgive Mike?"

She did not reply. Her thought was—bewilderedly: "That is Michael. Is it Michael? On the sea—like that—Michael?"

She shivered and hurried on.

At her side the babbling voice was silent, only a breathless cough kept breaking on the cold air.

"You are in a great—hurry," he said at last.

"Yes: I've got to pack, you see."

She gave Rose back to Mrs. Harvey, talked to her a little while, then turned to go back.

"I have walked too fast for you," she said gently. "You are coughing. I am sorry."

He protested eagerly, and continued to talk as they walked slowly back to the house. But it was not until they were in the drive that he said nervously:

"Er—Mike asked me to—to ask you if you—would—would prefer him to leave the house to-night. I think he feared you would refuse to stay another minute with him beneath the same roof, much less to pass another night there."

A queer ray of humour shot across her mind: she laughed drearily.

"Did he? I suppose I ought to have flung the dust of his house from my feet! I suppose I am horribly lacking in proper feeling and pride, but to tell you the truth it seems so unimportant to me. There is no train till to-morrow morning. I shall catch that. Meanwhile it's quite immaterial to me where I stay, or where he stays."

He did not reply, and they entered the house in silence.

"I am leaving to-morrow too," he said gently. "You will let me see you into your train, will you not? Beyond that I shall not worry you. I only go as far as Plymouth. I quite understand that my presence must be unwelcome to you."

She knitted her brows, striving to concentrate her mind on what he said—this man who was always babbling.

She said very earnestly:

"You are a well-meaning man."

He flushed and looked at her pathetically.

"I—I have had a cruel task——"

"I must go and pack," she said.

## CHAPTER XXIII

The train slid into Paddington station: Philippa looking out felt herself gliding past a panorama of faces. The train stopped and the face opposite her carriage became a thing alive, kindly, helpful, allied to a porter's body.

"That suit case, and the little bag," she said.

"Taxi, Miss?"

All in a moment this brisk porter was forcing her to decide that for which the seven hours' journey had not been long enough.

"I want them put into the cloak-room, please. And there's a box and a hat-box. . . ."

"Yes, Miss."

Soon it was done, so soon! She did not want to leave her capable porter: she felt that he infused a little of his capability into her. Without him she was slack—limp. . . .

Her thoughts went back to the time when she arrived here with her father. She remembered her joy in the noise and traffic and smell. It was very much the same now: the horses' hoofs still echoed with a hollow sound, only now there were so few horses. That was the difference. More taxis—oh, many more, and the smell was different, too—petrol. But the same rush and hurry. Why were people always in such a hurry? They had years and years before them—endless days and weeks—to do things in. . . .

She wandered out into the streets, grey streets with wet pavements and people with pallid faces in the lamplight. In Cornwall it would be light still. . . .

Michael would be having tea in the hall. Michael the scoundrel! How funny that was. The person would be

having it with him. Yes, the person would be having it with him. She stopped to say it with the more force, scarring herself with the words—"*The person will be having tea with him.*"

She walked on trembling. But she had faced it. What must she face next? "They will be talking about me—*laughing at me!*" She clenched her hands, and her brain, obeying her sick distaste, darted over such things as the curious hat a passing woman wore; the queer expression of a man; the way another carried his umbrella; the peculiar accent of a girl—was she German? Another part of her brain clamoured painfully—"They will be talking—they will be talking—talking—they will be talking——"

She stopped again. "*They will be talking about me—laughing at me!*" she said aloud.

A man passing stopped and looked at her uncertainly.

"I beg your pardon?" he said.

She looked at him in silence.

"You needn't stare at me as if I'm a bit o' dirt!" he said violently, and with the former elegance gone from his manner. "I don't mean any 'arm! You spoke to me! You did! You can't deny it!"

"I was speaking to myself."

"Oh, sorry, I'm sure, but it's a nabit I shouldn't encourage if I were you, Miss!"

He walked on staring huffily over his shoulder at her.

Philippa muttered: "A nabit I shouldn't encourage," and gave a little laugh.

But she recognized that the offended young man was right. She pulled herself together, and went into an A.B.C. and ordered tea and roll and butter.

She knew that she had to decide where she meant to go: she knew that she ought to want to go to Anne. . . .

She drank and ate, and faced the thought that she must think at once and clearly. But beyond realising that it was not worth while to dwell on the thought of the woman who was with Brent, she made no definite headway. About

the woman she achieved clear thought. It was not she who mattered, but Michael: the woman was only the tangible thing useful to make belief of what he had done the easier. The thing that counted was that Michael was as he was; that he had done what he had done. In her pride she recognized the shame of jealousy of the woman.

She left the A.B.C. and walked along Westbourne Grove. It seemed to her that she was one of an endless stream of pale-faced girls walking along, only they were all in a hurry. That was what struck her as strange: everyone was in such a hurry, and everyone had pale faces. Presently it began to rain, and it was funny to see the innumerable shining umbrellas that sprang up everywhere. One of the endless pale-faced girls going her way, offered her the shelter of her umbrella. Philippa accepted it, and answered the remarks the girl made till she was met and claimed by a young man whose pale face was patchy with cold and indigestion. The girl, with many apologies that were peculiarly arch, pranced off with this young man, and Philippa pursued her way alone.

A man—he was very stout and wore a silk hat—next offered his umbrella to her. When she refused, he observed that he had a tender heart and could not bear to see a lady getting wet, even if she were a Suffragette.

Philippa walked towards a policeman, and the man hurried on his way.

She stood still thinking. Oddly her little shabby bedroom in Chelsea rose before her eyes.

"I will go there," she said.

## CHAPTER XXIV

She came along the Prince's Road at last. Her eyes studied the familiar barrows of fruit and meat: they were the same as they had always been: the cries were the same, the smells, the people. A faint sense of relief stole round her heart; a little of the tension relaxed. She went on to the hat shop at the corner: she saw its light streaming out as of old, glimmering in the puddles: as she drew nearer she saw the old familiar hats—red, blue, green, crude and gaudy. She stood a minute, looking in: she noticed that the plate glass window was dirty, that the cards advertising the hats were dirtier still and one had fallen and lay on a red hat, upside down. And the hats—surely there were fewer, and weren't they shabbier than she had known them?

She opened the shop door and went in: she noticed that the bell did not ring. No one was in the shop: she stood looking round, it was very dusty and there was a smell of onions. From the little room behind the shop there issued the sound of voices, one was raised and sharp, and the words it spoke reached her where she stood.

"All very well for you! But I'm sick of being hungry, and what chance d'you think the poor little thing'll have, with me never having proper food——"

It was Mrs. Smith's voice, and the accompanying murmur belonged to Arthur. Philippa pushed a chair across the floor, and the voices ceased. The door opened and Arthur entered the shop saying jocosely:

"Only too pleased to try on any hat for you——"

"I've come back."

He seized her hand and shook it heartily.

"Quite sure? Now, you're not a ghost, are you?"

She recognized that he was not up to his usual form; his wit was forced, and his face was whiter and longer than ever, she thought, and his clothes shabbier.

"Mrs. Smith will be delighted. I must prepare her. A shock—under the circumstances—Ah, she has outwitted me! She cometh!"

"Miss Hamilton! There, I knew it was your voice. Oh, how tired you look, my dear!" Mrs. Smith suddenly put her arms about her, and kissed her.

"I'd like to go to bed, if you don't mind. I don't mind damp sheets."

"There, you come along with me. Lord, I'm glad to see you. There, my dear, no one shall worry you. You've come to stay, haven't you?"

"Yes."

She was led into the little dining-room which also smelt of onions, and put into a chair by the meagre fire.

"You're wet through almost, Miss Hamilton. Now let's get your coat off. There, that's right. Your bed'll soon be ready for you. The children are out to a party, except Isabella. No one shall worry you. You just stay there, and I'll go and see about your bed. Don't you worry."

Out in the passage she met Arthur.

"My dear, we can't afford to have her here now——"

"Can't afford, can't we, Arthur Smith? Well, we're going to afford it. What's more, you're going out now to buy half a pound of ham, and a pound of eating apples. They always fancy a bit of fruit when the appetite's delicate. D'you think I'd send that poor young thing away, when she's come back to us like this?"

"What d'you think's up, Martha?"

"How should I know? A gentleman most likely—broken her heart. That's what you're like—you men. Eh? I don't know nor care what it is, Mr. Inquisitive. I'm just going to look after her. That's enough for me."

Some of this reached Philippa, sitting in the American cloth chair by the fire, and Arthur's final reply, reaching her quite clearly, reduced her to helpless laughter.

"You lub everybody 'cept poor lickle Arthur-parthur, Popsey."

Isabella came creeping in, shy and solemn.

"Mother told me to take off your boots, Miss Hamilton. What are you laughing at?"

"It's Arthur, he's so f-funny." Philippa was wiping her eyes. Arthur peering in inquisitively at the door was delighted: he went off to the kitchen calling out:

"Pops, I've cheered her up! She's laughing at my wit! I feel as proud as when King George slapped me on the back, and declared I'd made his sides ache with laughing!"

Isabella squatted on the floor, and unlaced her wet boots.

"Mother said you were dreadfully tired, and I wasn't to talk, Miss Hamilton."

"I am tired, but you may talk, Isabella."

"I only wanted to tell you that I've cleaned my teeth every morning while you've been away, and when I lost my toothbrush, I used father's shaving-brush. I've never missed once."

"That's a good child."

"We're very poor now, business isn't what it was, and father's lost his place at Smart & Owen's, because Mr. Smart had a young friend he wanted to help, so he put him into the cashier's office, and father had to go, and now he sits on a stool and addresses envelopes, and mother's so busy, because we couldn't afford Maud any more, only Lilian, she hasn't got time to trim the hats, and we've all had measles and then mumps, and little Artie got a cold on his chest and a rash and we thought it was a flea first we'd brought home from that dirty Sally Slipper, but it wasn't, it was the chill coming out—oh, am I talking too much?"

She sat on the floor hugging Philippa's wet boots, her light eyes glittered in her excited little face.

"We don't have meat much now. Will you mind that, Miss Hamilton? I don't mind that so much as my stockings. Annie Jones laughs and she says: 'Ugh, which is stocking and which darning?' And I'm helping. I do their translations for them, and I charge them sometimes a halfpenny, sometimes a penny. Once I charged twopence, and then I'd got eightpence, so I bought a pound of sausages. They did taste lovely. And one day I caught that Annie Jones stealing an apple out of Mary Wilson's pocket, and I said I'd tell on her unless she gave me twopence. I bought three meat tarts with it—stale—three for twopence."

"Oh, Isabella, that was horrid. It's all wrong."

"Oh, no, Miss Hamilton, she can afford it, her father wears a tall hat every day to go to business. Are your feet warm now? I'm not to ask you any questions, Miss Hamilton, so I won't. Have you had measles or mumps or a chill on your chest?"

"No: I'm only very tired, Isabella."

"You're going to bed. May I come and sit on your bed, Miss Hamilton? Oh, here's mother. Miss Hamilton *said* I might talk, mother, didn't you, Miss Hamilton?"

"You run along now, and fetch father's slippers—they're under the kitchen table. You haven't brought any luggage, of course, Miss Hamilton?" this last with a careless air of extreme delicacy.

"I left it at Paddington—in the cloak-room. I'm so sorry, Mrs. Smith."

"Don't you worry. We can manage, I hope. You won't mind a nightdress of mine, it's a new one I've just made for——" Mrs. Smith hesitated, then went on. "I've made your bed. You come along up now. I've lit the fire in your room, so you needn't fear damp, I think. Can you manage in Arthur's slippers?"

She followed Mrs. Smith up the dark little staircase with its familiar smell, and the stains on the faded wall-paper, and into her old room, which, through the thick smoke issuing from the chimney, wore a comfortingly familiar look.

"Oh, blow that fire! What's the chimney smoking for? Open the window, Isabella. That's better. It'll soon leave off. Here's the nightdress, Miss Hamilton."

Mrs. Smith touched it lovingly: Philippa did not know that in proffering it to her, she had made a real sacrifice. She glanced surprised at its flimsy texture, its laces and ribbons.

"What a fine one," she said.

"Yes. It's for——"

Philippa looked at her in her pause.

"Oh," she said.

"April," Mrs. Smith said. "End."

Philippa said: "I shall be able to help you. You look worn out."

Mrs. Smith's lips trembled.

"Oh, I'm all right, only you get a bit upset and tired at times. I always make myself a new nightdress for it," she laid her hand on the nightgown again.

Philippa suddenly understood.

"I would rather have an old one. It's such a pity to wear that just for one night—washing always spoils them a little."

"No, don't you worry. I want you to wear it, Miss Hamilton, and what on earth should I wash it for? An iron run over it and it'll be as good as new."

That night as Philippa lay with her aching head on the pillow with its old familiar smell of strong soap, the first glimmer of future purpose came to her. She realised vaguely that she could help these people.

## CHAPTER XXV

THE next morning she woke early: as she woke, thought rushed upon her, tore her, so that she gasped, but with a gesture of her hands pushing away the bedclothes she put it from her.

"I've got to help these people!" was her chosen thought. She clung to it, kept it before her, rose and made a business-like toilet, went down to breakfast in the little cheerless dining-room where the fire was not lit now until dinner-time.

"Mrs. Smith," she said, "you'll have to have a sale. A Stupendous Sale. Something right out of the common. Your business needs waking up."

Arthur observed that a business depending on the fickle sex—he made a rhyme about the sex so fickle landing you in a pickle—while Mrs. Smith asked Philippa if she hadn't noticed the shop at the next corner? "That's what started it, Miss Hamilton. It's a draper's—Wilkinson & Drew—and sells hats too."

"Then we must sell better hats."

"I haven't had the time lately——" Mrs. Smith's face in the morning light was haggard and tired; there was a button missing from her blouse, one of her cuffs was torn: she had lost the sort of businesslike neatness that had been so characteristic of her.

"But I shall have time," Philippa replied.

Mrs. Smith's face lightened a little.

"I've all sorts of ideas. We'll have a queue of people waiting outside, and a great placard 'Full inside' hung in the door," Philippa said, while Arthur murmured that it hadn't been hung in his door for a long while!

Mrs. Smith eyed him icily: it was evident that for once she thought his wit was coarse.

Philippa finished the grey lumpy porridge that had been put before her, and pushed her plate aside.

"Now, Mrs. Smith, can you afford to close the shop for a few days?"

"Last week I sold one hat, the week before I sold three—all half-a-crowns."

Philippa nodded.

"Isabella, can you go and pull down the blinds?"

"I shall feel as if my favourite hat has died," Arthur said.

Gladys looked at Philippa from great mournful eyes. "Oh, Miss Hamilton, will I be able to have a new pair of boots soon?"

"I hope so. But you'll have to help."

"All right. Ferdy'll help too, won't you, Ferdy?"

Ferdinand, who had lately developed a sentimental regard for the opposite sex, replied that he'd do anything he could for a lady always.

"Mrs. Smith, may I do just what I like in the house?"

Mrs. Smith's eyes filled with tears. "Anything—anything."

Arthur professed extreme alarm. "My Popsy, aren't you very rash? Suppose—oh, my love, suppose she is a Suffragette?"

For the next few days Philippa worked hard from morning to night. Mrs. Smith opined feebly that it was not fit for a lady, and added that "under the circumstances" she couldn't do as much to help as she would have liked to do. Philippa swept and dusted, set Lilian scrubbing, washed and mended, trimmed hats, and discovered a latent talent for alluring advertisement. She took the whole family out to a heavy luncheon, and watched them eat with a certain satisfaction. She did elaborate accounts to find how far she could help them with her small income: she evolved careful plans to manage the help with a subtle unobtrusive-

ness that should not hurt any susceptibilities, and she went to bed every night so tired that she fell asleep almost at once, and slept heavily as a rule through the night. After a little while she wrote to Dick: she found it difficult to concentrate her mind upon him: his love, in retrospect, assumed a shape almost fantastical, it seemed curiously unreal. When once the thought came to her that now she was free, and so free to marry him if he wished, it brought with it only a vague sense of repulsion. And almost at once her mind strayed from the thought, it could not accept it as important, as a thing real and to be worked out earnestly. She forced her thought back to Dick, and, throughout the trimming of a hat, considered him and what she must do. Afterwards that purple and green hat was always to her "Dick's hat." When she sold it at the sale for four shillings, she felt sorry to see it go. She came to the conclusion as she put in the last stitches that fastened the white wing at the side, that she wanted Dick's friendship badly, but not his love. And with the sewing in of the headlining she concocted her letter to him. A short letter it was, telling him where she was, and that she was not Michael's wife. She gave no details, not knowing how much he knew. When a few days later she found a letter addressed in his handwriting lying beside her plate on the breakfast table, her thought was: "He will say horrible things of Michael." She did not open it, and was not conscious of any particular hurry to read it. She said, pleased: "Lilian has poached the eggs splendidly."

Mrs. Smith, visibly enjoying hers, agreed. "You've got it in you some way to teach, Miss Hamilton. Lately I've not been able to fancy an egg no way."

"That's because we been having 'breakfast eggs,' now we're having 'new laid,'" Isabella observed.

Mrs. Smith glanced sharply at Philippa. "How's that, Miss Hamilton? You told me a shilling a dozen——"

"I bought them at a different place—a cheaper place. Is Artie choking?"

"He always eats like that, if he likes anything, he stuffs as much into his mouth as it will hold, and then he can't breathe," Isabella explained.

"Dirty little beast," Gladys said gloomily.

Mrs. Smith reprimanded her angrily, while Arthur asked what vegetable his youngest son resembled? "Why an artichoke, of course!" And upon this jest he went off to his work of addressing envelopes. The shop bell rang, and Philippa rose and went into the shop.

"Good biz!" Mrs. Smith called after her laughing. "At this hour!"

Philippa sold a "Sunday" hat to a mild little person who actually seemed to know what suited her, then she went up to her room, and looked at Dick's letter. It bore a Paris post mark; she experienced a curious sense of relief, and at the same time, a feeling of disappointment. She wanted him—at times the thought of his happy boy's face set her longing for him—but she shrank instinctively from his buoyancy, his high spirits, his imperious demands: she was too tired to deal with him.

The letter was not as long as she had expected: it seemed that he knew everything. He had been "utterly astounded," and had not yet got over the shock of it. There were a good many "poor little girls" in it, and his chief lament was that he had been called to Paris on a big commission, and couldn't get away to come to her. As for Michael's behaviour—he was a "cad," he ought to be horsewhipped, his conduct was unbelievable. For his part, he hardly realised the horrible thing even yet. . . .

The letter left her thoughtful: after a while she read it through again, then put it back into the envelope, and slipped it into her pocket. Her lips curved in a sudden ironical smile, out-stripping conscious deduction, as the thought formed: "Am I still to inspire his life?"

"Miss Hamilton, there's *six* people in the shop, and mother's serving them all, and *could* you come down," it was Isabella's voice through the door.

Philippa came out into the passage. Isabella had on her outdoor things ready for school.

Philippa thought: "Perhaps—at a distance."

Isabella said: "May I hold your arm, Miss Hamilton? Six people! And two of them've got *muffs! Aren't* we looking up?"

Gladys waited at the foot of the staircase.

"Miss Hamilton, *could* you lend me a penny?"

"I'll give you one if you tell me what you want it for."

Gladys stood red and sullen-faced.

"I know! She wants it for the dancing mistress! She's gone mad on her——"

"Be quiet, Isabella. Is she nice, Gladys, your dancing mistress?"

"Oh, Miss Hamilton, if you could see her pointing her toes! I want to buy her some flowers. That beast of a May Thomas buys her all sorts——"

"They all do, Miss Hamilton, 'cept me. They give her sweets and apples and all sorts," chimed in Isabella. "And she's not a *patch* on you——"

Philippa went into the shop, and served one of the ladies with a muff. She gave her wrong change, and presently, with another customer, brought a red hat when asked for a blue. Mrs. Smith eyed her shrewdly.

"You're tired," she said, when the shop was empty, "and I don't wonder. What you better do is to go out for a bit, Miss Hamilton."

Philippa looked out between dangling hats in all positions, and saw sunshine gleaming on the opposite shop-windows. She looked at Mrs. Smith.

"We're so busy."

"Oh, I can manage all right. It's easy enough to get through a good day's work when things are looking up! It's when everything's black that you get too tired to stand, Miss Hamilton. That's one way the men get the better of us: they can just go on and on, whether the luck's up or down, while our nerves get the better of us, and we go under."

Philippa went out. She knew that she had to come to a knowledge of herself, she had known it vaguely for some while, but now she knew it quite clearly and definitely. There was behind her tired brain a mass of confused thought, chaotic feeling, clamouring. She was too straightforward by nature to be able to go on long without a clear understanding of herself: there was bound to come a reckoning. In some subtle way Dick's letter had hastened her to this conclusion. She made her way to Battersea Park, and sat down on the seat she had sat upon that grey day—surely years and years ago?—with the red-faced lady who suffered from corns. She remembered her desperate endeavour to make herself interested in things, and the lady's misunderstanding of the motive of her interest in her corns. She smiled at the memory: there was no lack in her life now of interest: rather, there was too much of it, and—she faced the thought with a deep breath—it centred round one man, a man who was a scoundrel. She watched the river as she had watched it that other day, only then it had been grey, dull and lonely, now there was a gleam, a glitter. . . . Like her life? The thought leapt at her, striking her, piercing, thrilling her. . . . Her mother's dying voice sounded afar off, muffled: "May you never know the curse of love!"

"No! No!" She rose to her feet, walked on hurriedly.

A woman, laden with a basket of violets, pink anemones and daffodils urged her to buy. She looked at her blindly: "No! No!" she said.

The woman looked after her resentfully. "Needn't be so fierce about it!"

She stopped again and stood staring at the water: thought throbbed and confused her. What was it she was trying to see clearly? Nothing would come but the memory of that pale-faced girl who had tried to take an interest in things. A pale sullen face beneath a black hat—facing her—in a mirror, and two girls—art students—Tommy, both of them. . . . A nondescript black dog sniffed at her

skirt: she bent and stroked his head, "Are you my dog, that was a puppy at first?" she thought.

The dog sniffed all round her. "You can smell Rose," she thought, and the tears came into her eyes. An old man came along and called: "Dash!" He smiled at her: "He's a good dog," he said.

She walked on along by the river, slowly, her mind concentrated on all that had happened lately. She opened her thoughts to that day on the cliff when the babbling voice beside her had told her incredible things: she faced it all, straightforwardly, without flinching. And at the end her thought was of her mother's last prayer. She stood a minute and answered it. "I am glad I know it."

She walked on, things clear at last. Michael was unworthy, incredibly unworthy: she loved him: not for all the unthinking peace of the old days would she give up her love. She knew that with all its pain, its weary tragedy, she would not have had it blotted out, if she could. For the time being the knowledge brought with it a strange exalted sense of peace. The stress and strife, the struggling, died down: it was as if she had come into some haven of rest. Dimly, very sweetly, little bits of comradeship between her and Michael stole into her mind: odd sentences, with his kindly glance: "You've got your sweater on under that coat? That's right."

With that came the rush of the water beneath the boat, the salt sea on her lips. "Starboard your helm!"—That sail to Mullstone—it had been good—"Getting hungry, Philippa? Enjoying yourself?" Ah, a day of days. Her mind gathered in other moments, cherished them—a smile, a gesture, a word—till she came to that last afternoon but one—"It never will be for you, I think." Never would be an afternoon for poking and prying. She was glad he had said that. And then later still, on that last evening: "Philippa won't grudge any time or trouble to help me with my work; she never has."

A sob rose in her throat at that. So she had not failed

altogether in her duties? Was that all she had to cherish? And staring blindly at the river there came to her afresh the memory of his long deceit. . . . And after awhile a sentence of the babbler's: "You will forgive him?"

Forgive? How queer that seemed. What did it matter whether she forgave or not? There was, to her, no question of forgiveness, or of non-forgiveness: it was too big for that. And again: "My only comfort is that no one will know." She smiled a little at that. It seemed so immaterial, so far as she was concerned. For him—for Michael —she was aware of a fierce longing to shield him, to keep the story of his behaviour from everyone.

In the end, before she turned from the river, she had faced her life: her deep thought was that she had to prove herself worthy of the great love that had come to her. That the man to whom she gave it was unworthy mattered not at all; her love was a beautiful thing, and she was going to live recognising its beauty.

She went back to the shop in Prince's Road, pale, weary, in a state of exaltation.

It was not until she was in bed that night that she remembered Dick and his letter.

## CHAPTER XXVI

"You won't tell me anything, Phil?"

"No, Anne."

"Beyond the fact that Michael never married you."

"No."

"And you expect to keep my friendship?"

A little smile hovered at the corners of Philippa's lips.

"Yes."

"That's why he persuaded you to write and ask me not to mention the marriage! I never understood the secrecy."

Anne walked up and down the room smoking a cigarette.

"I wish I'd been here when—when it happened. It seems to me I'm fated to be abroad just when you need me. You'd have told me everything then."

Philippa did not reply.

"It's four weeks since you left Cornwall?"

"Four weeks and two days."

Anne came to a stop before her.

"Oh, child, child, you're nothing but skin and bone! Can Mike be so vile?"

Philippa sat still and silent.

"Is he a scoundrel, Phil? *Mike?*"

"Yes."

Anne went on pacing the floor: once she paused to pick up a daffodil that had fallen from a bowl, and replaced it.

"He pretended to marry you? Why? Phil, he wanted you and couldn't get you any other way? And not enough to be bound to you?"

"He thought he wanted me—just for a little while—then he knew he didn't."

"Mike!" Anne said.

She came and stood by her again.

"Did he—did he make love to you?"

Philippa did not reply: over her face and neck the colour surged, ebbed, leaving her very white.

"Phil, did he? Phil, did he?"

"No."

Anne drew a long breath.

"Why did you keep me in suspense, child?"

Philippa was silent, only in her face there showed a sudden fierce sullenness. She was hiding, with all her mother's passionate determination, the answer that had leapt to life at Anne's question: "Did he make love to you?" "I wish he had! I wish he had!" It was there in her desolate heart—tearing, scorching her. . . .

"Philippa, I shall make you hate me soon."

"Yes, Anne."

Anne went and stood by the window and looked out over grey roofs lit with a pink glow from the setting sun. She did not speak for a while; when she turned from the window, she said gently:

"If I can find you other work——"

"I would rather stay where I am."

"I mayn't do even that? Phil, are you holding me responsible?"

"You? How?"

"I introduced Mike to you."

A little laugh came from Philippa's pale lips.

"Oh, Anne!"

"Well—why not? You're refusing my help—shutting me out——"

"There's nothing you can do."

"Evidently. Well we may as well have the tea-things taken away. Have you seen those articles of mine on the gardening craze?"

She continued to talk about the articles while the maid took away the tea-things, then as the door closed:

"I feel as if we're on a stage—you and I, Phil—it's a

creepy feeling. I'm sorry. I had no right to try to make you tell me what you'd rather not."

"I can't. But I—want you, Anne."

"That's all right then. I'm always here. Only I don't like your being at that horrible hat-shop."

Philippa wrinkled her brow.

"I can help them, Anne. They have been so good to me. If you knew—— It seems to be my work. For now. I don't look ahead. I just go on. It's the best for me." But she knew that she had not explained quite satisfactorily to herself. She did not realize that it was the same instinct that in her mother had driven her to solitude, to a fierce loneliness. The Smiths needed to be told nothing: quite unconsciously Philippa looked upon them as having no right to demand anything from herself: in a kindly way she recognized the difference between them, and it brought a sense of rest. Anne, and people like Anne, worried her: gestures, words, expression, even atmosphere were a continual, more or less, veiled query. Or so it seemed to her: but the thought of ingratitude to Anne hurt her.

"You don't know the pleasure I get out of a tea-party with sausages, given by me, in honour of some imaginary event. Or the joy of buying new boots for Isabella. Or the interest of making up falsehoods about it, not to hurt their pride, and managing with my scrap of money——"

"The place always smells of onions."

"It might smell of black beetles."

"Phil, do you ever hear from Dick Charters?"

"I heard about a fortnight ago," a little laugh dwelt in her eyes.

"I used to be afraid he would fall in love with you."

"Why so afraid?"

"Because you're not the sort of girl to hold him."

Philippa looked amused. "You're right. He thought he was in love with me down in Cornwall. I don't think he thinks so now."

"Oh, so he thought that? No, he is in Naples now with

the Hewittsons. Enid is improving her Italian accent. Did you like him, Phil?"

Philippa looked across at her. "No, I didn't fall in love with him, Anne."

Anne laughed.

"It's a dangerous game to play, Phil, answering unasked questions."

Philippa looked thoughtfully at the bowl of daffodils. "I am very fond of him, Anne, he is a dear boy. He and I are good friends, I think. I hope we shall be always."

Anne nodded.

"I love him. Poor old Dick!"

"Why poor?"

"Because his father married his mother," Anne said.

"And died?"

"No, just because they married, and had Dick."

## CHAPTER XXVII

At breakfast Mrs. Smith had given a queer little laugh: she had said to Arthur: "Mrs. Dawson said she'd have the children, you know."

It seemed to Philippa that that was all there was to herald this queer day of muffled voices, cautious footsteps, a doctor coming and going, a nurse wanting to be fed. It was a cold day, with an easterly wind blowing, and it seemed to her that every customer who entered the shop, was either preceded or followed by a piece of dirty paper blowing along the floor. Arthur—it was a holiday: someone had died at his place—tiptoed in and out a good many times during the course of the afternoon, and each time he came with a jest upon his lips. Once he said: "She told me to remind you about Mrs. Arnold's hat. She's fearfully worried about Mrs. Arnold's hat. She says it's to go off without fail at three o'clock, quite an anarchist sort of sound about it, isn't there, Miss Hamilton?" Philippa put Mrs. Arnold's hat into a box, and gave it to him to take to its destination. He looked down at it doubtfully, longing in his pale eyes.

"I don't like to leave her."

"She would sooner you took the hat. There is no one else to take it," Philippa said pitifully.

"Well, if I must, I must."

Philippa went upstairs: she met Lilian coming down. "A fire in 'er bedroom," she said in awe-struck tones. "I've just took the coal up."

From the bedroom Mrs. Smith's voice issued querulously: "I wouldn't lose Mrs. Arnold's custom for anything! Three daughters, and all buy their hats from me——"

Philippa pushed the door open noiselessly: "The hat has been sent off to Mrs. Arnold," she said. A little sallow-

faced woman putting coal on the fire looked round indignantly: "You made her jump!"

Philippa retired hastily with a queer heart-searching moan echoing in her ears—"I wish it was this time to-morrow, nurse!"

She went downstairs restlessly, and into the kitchen.

"What are you doing, Lilian?"

"Washing up, Miss."

"What's wrong with Artie's face?"

"'E's been licking the dirt off the taters 'e found in a bag."

"I wonder if there's anything I can do."

Lilian banged a wet plate down, and jerked a thumb towards the ceiling. "For 'er? No, there ain't nothink. You can't 'urry things up nor you can't 'elp; we've all got to come to it some day I s'pose. Some 'ollers, some don't, and then it's over. Lot of fuss to make about one tiddling bit of a baby, I allus think, but I s'pose there's some reason in it. Artie, keep your 'ands off, or I'll boil yer alive, I will!"

Lilian came to her presently.

"Nurse says she wants a glass o' ale! I never knew such a fish. She's just 'ad a glass o' milk. I tell 'er I'm too busy to run errands for 'er!"

Philippa found herself in the midst of a brawl. The nurse's sallow little face had settled into martyred lines of obstinacy. "Ve-ry well," was her contribution. "It ain't my fault, what happens then. No one can answer for themselves when they're faint and weary."

"Better to be faint and weary than some things!" was Lilian's darkly meaning retort.

A loud cry for "Nurse" from above ended the dispute: the nurse, casting malevolent glances behind her, and scattering mutterings as she went, hurried upstairs.

Philippa said wearily: "It's sordid. Go and finish washing up, Lilian."

"It's all very well, Miss, but wot I says is there was Mrs.

Spink's nurse she got drinking like a fish and when the biby come she up and threw it on the fire, and all she says to the doctor was 'it'll be nice and warm there.' And they do say as Tommy Walker who's always drunk owes it to 'is mother's nurse drinking all the day afore 'e was born, and casting her breath all stinking with drink on the biby's new-born 'ead——"

Arthur came in.

"Happy event? No? It's cold out—sort of wind that gives you the blues, Miss Hamilton. What's Artie howling for?"

"'E's been and put 'is 'ead in the oven," came from the kitchen in Lilian's indignant voice.

Philippa went to the kitchen and tried to soothe Artie: the nurse came down and said in her most professional voice: "My patient is being disturbed. Kindly keep that child quiet."

Arthur performed a weary caper behind her retreating back.

"Anyone'd know *you* were a spinster, my dear!"

Philippa wanted to wash the dirty Artie all over.

"'E'll let you, if you'll give 'im a bit o' the soap to chew while you does it," Lilian assured her.

Philippa made her preparations. She went upstairs to fetch a bag of ju-jubes that were to take the place of soap to keep Artie quiet. As she crept past Mrs. Smith's door Arthur came out.

"Tell me something funny to say! Anything! Quick! I—I can't think of a thing! She looked—she'll get nervous if I don't—— Anything!"

She stood dumb. His little eves blinked and snapped entreatingly.

"I—can't!" she said.

"She looked—good God!" He poked his head round the door. "What's the difference between you and old Henry Jones, Popsy? Why, you're a lier *in* bed, and he's a liar *out* of bed. See? Ha! Ha!"

He came out and closed the door.

"She looked——" he went into the little drawing-room, and picked up the family album.

Philippa hurried on down to the kitchen. Was this the penalty demanded of a funny man? Unfastening Artie's buttons and tapes she wondered. This the price he had to pay for his enjoyment of his wit? She saw his long white face—there were little drops of moisture on his high brow. . . .

"Ain't it a creepy sort o' day, Miss? For the life o' me I can't 'elp banging the things about!"

"You must try to be quiet, Lilian."

Artie, divested of many and unbecoming garments was unexpectedly alluring. Philippa washed and scrubbed with an energy unobjected to so long as a ju-jube was forthcoming each time one slipped down his throat.

"Ain't he a fattun?" Lilian came and looked on. "This new one'll never be a fine biby like 'im—ain't been enough food about."

Philippa shivered: she told Lilian sharply to go on with her work. "Gone!" cooed the fattun, opening his mouth wide to show its emptiness. Philippa struggling with putty-soft black-rimmed finger-nails poked a ju-jube into his mouth.

Arthur tiptoed in to ask the time.

"Only half-past four! I thought my watch must have stopped."

He lingered restlessly.

"Not what you'd call thin, is he, Miss Hamilton? It's very good of you to give him a bath, I'm sure."

"I like doing it."

"Would a Militant Suffragette like bathing a baby now?"

"If they could stick 'Votes for Women' on its naked body and send 'im round London they would," Lilian replied caustically. "Nor they wouldn't care when 'e died neither!"

"It'd be another instance of the brutality of man, eh? Cause they wouldn't have done it if man didn't keep the vote from 'em," Arthur opined listlessly.

"Oh, wouldn't they? If they'd got the vote they'd be wanting somethink else, and killing bibies to get it!" scoffed Lilian.

"You——" Arthur stopped, they all grew still, listened: Artie said "Gone!" and opened his mouth wide. Philippa rummaged for a ju-jube. The nurse came into the kitchen: "She wants to know if Lilian's aired Mr. Smith's vest and pants for to-morrow."

"Yes, I 'ave! Twice over, to make sure!"

Philippa sat on her heels, and poked ju-jubes into Artie's mouth. Arthur followed the nurse from the kitchen. There was a ring at the private door, and they heard Arthur speaking to the doctor, while the hum of traffic grew louder, and the unintelligible cries of street vendors streamed in harshly. Then the door was closed, footsteps went cautiously upstairs; Lilian dropped a tea cup, and stooped to pick up the pieces. Artie made choking noises, and Philippa thumped him on his fat little back. She was thinking that this was life, and that she would never live. It gave her a curious sensation of unreality: she was conscious of being so full of life, and the power to live, and yet she had to realise that she would exist only, keep for ever on the outskirts of life, watch it going on round her, watch it pass her, but never dive deep into the heart of it herself. And she knew now how deeply beautiful her life could have been made. She lifted Artie from his bath, and sat him on a towel in her lap, and began to rub him dry. She rubbed listlessly; she felt very tired. She bent her head and kissed his fat shoulders, his neck.

"I like kissing a fattun like 'im," Lilian said. "But 'e'll 'ave a big nose like 'is Pa."

Silence fell then: Artie was drowsy and his head nodded against Philippa's shoulder: it was beginning to get dusk there in the little kitchen, squeezed in beneath a sky of roofs

and roofs and roofs. . . . In Cornwall, Philippa knew, it would be still a glorious afternoon with the dusk still far ahead: the wind was from the east; were the mackerel drivers going down towards Porthdrewen?

"I'm bound to scream, or somethink!" came in a hoarse whisper from Lilian. "I'm bound to!"

"Don't be foolish, Lilian."

"I can't 'elp it. It's so quiet! There ain't a blessed sound. It gives you the creeps! Why don't no one want a new 'at to-day?"

"Pick up the cat!"

Lilian made a dive at a black and elusive cat who sometimes lived in the kitchen; the cat scratched her, and swung its tail angrily.

"You brute, yer! That's better, Miss!"

There was a ring at the private door again.

"I can't go! I can't!" Lilian screamed hysterically. "It's the undertaker! I know it's the undertaker!"

"Don't be so ridiculous, Lilian. Be quiet! I'll go. You finish dressing Artie."

She rose and went out into the narrow passage: she too was affected by the atmosphere, the waiting, perhaps by Lilian's hysterical outburst. When she opened the door, and saw Dick standing there, she was not surprised. She said: "You've come back?"

He stared at her oddly.

"Phil! I had to! I wanted you—I couldn't keep away any longer. Come out somewhere. This place makes me feel ill. What have you got that on for, Phil?"

The passion of his first words had given place to a querulous disgust in the last.

She looked down, and saw that the wet bath towel was still draped round her hips. She took it off mechanically.

"I've been bathing Artie. Hush. No, I can't come. Mrs. Smith is ill. I can't come now."

"You must. I want you. What's Mrs. Smith's illness

to do with you? It's hateful for you to be here. It's sordid. Rotten. You must come. This vile place!"

"I want to close the door, Dick. The noise may disturb her. Come in or out."

He stepped inside, looking round frowningly.

"How beastly you are to me, Phil. And I wanted you so horribly. How can we talk here? Can't you see it's impossible? You must come somewhere—oh, Lord, what a row! What a hole! Where are you going, Phil? Phil!"

"I must stop Artie crying——"

When she returned, she found Dick standing stiffly where she had left him. She looked up at him gravely: he was paler, and, she thought, thinner.

"I'd better go, Phil. It's pretty evident you don't want me here."

"Another time——"

"Good God! Really, Phil? You're going to turn me off because that woman's ill! Because a beastly kid starts yelling! You can't mean it, Phil! You can't!"

"It's—a baby, Dick."

"I know it's a baby, though it might be a screech-owl by the row it made——"

"No, no, another baby—not that one—a new baby, Dick, that's what is the matter with Mrs. Smith."

"Oh, I see. Well, what good are you doing here? It's sordid. You oughtn't to be mixed up in it. I want to talk to you——"

"You're different, Dick."

Her grave eyes were on his face.

"I know. But you'll make me just the same as I was, Phil. Better. I've—I've had a beastly time. Be decent to me. Come along, I can't bear to think of you here."

"I've been back here for two months."

"I know. Don't. But I've got that beastly portrait on hand. I couldn't get away. What's that ghastly noise?

She glanced up the staircase, without answering.

"Oh! Oh, good Lord. I'd better go——"

"Yes, Dick, please."

"You'll come too, Phil?" He opened the street door and stepped outside.

"Not now. Some other time, Dick."

"But when? When, Phil? I'd better go. I'll write, shall I? Good-bye. I hate you being here. I'll write. What a hole!——"

She stood in the doorway and watched him stride up the street: she saw him collide with a dreary man distributing pamphlets: she guessed his ferocity by the indignant appeal the dreary man made to another dreary man who was walking between boards that advertised someone's pills. She thought Dick had altered in some way: he looked older. It was queer to think that they had met again—and like that: looking back it struck her as peculiarly disappointing. The dreary man with the pamphlets came along, and handed her a yellow paper. She took it, and looked down at it absently. "Why be serious? Life is one Long Joke. Come and see us, and you will agree with us. . . ."

Poor Dick. He had arrived at an unfortunate time. How disgusted he had been. Michael would not have been disgusted. Yet he was more fastidious than Dick. Of course it was sordid. . . .

She stopped a girl with a basket of flowers, and bought some lilies of the valley. She stood in the doorway, breathing in their scent: she did not want to go back into the house. Two girls paused and looked in at the shop window: they were arm in arm. "Wish they'd have another sale. Lillie got a hat for three bob—you wouldn't believe! She let on to Edie Simmonds it was half a guinea, and she sucked it up like a bird. . . ."

A little woman in black came briskly along, and entered the shop. Philippa closed the door, and went in to her. When she had gone, she went upstairs restlessly to her bedroom. The drawing-room door was ajar, and she saw

Arthur sitting in the window, turning the leaves of the family album. He looked round at her with a nervous jump. "Thought you were a mouse!" he said, and gave a foolish laugh.

"Tea," she thought. "I'll go and get tea for all of us."

She went downstairs: as she reached the hall she heard the door of Mrs. Smith's room open; she stood still, listening. The doctor came out, Arthur joined him. "Everything going splendidly. A fine little boy. Grand head of hair—like yours, ha, ha!"

She heard Arthur's voice.

"Auburn, doctor! We'll call it auburn to the missus, eh? Some people think carrots are only for donkeys!"

## CHAPTER XXVIII

THE next morning Philippa went into Mrs. Smith's bedroom very quietly: she had never come near birth before: it seemed to her a wonderful thing that there should be a new life, another living soul, in the house.

Mrs. Smith lay in bed with her grey-brown hair pulled up very tight, and twisted into a painful-looking knob on top of her head. She looked much as usual, except that the ruddiness of her face was patchy in parts; and the flimsy, elaborate nightgown struck at once an unusual note of importance.

"Oh, Miss Hamilton, there was that hat—Mrs. Arnold's —it did go off all right? I wouldn't lose her custom for anything. I kept worrying."

"I'm so sorry. Yes, I sent it before three o'clock."

"That's all right then. Seven pounds. Smallest I've had yet. He's the image of his father."

Philippa obeyed the jerk of her arm and bending over the bed looked down upon a little, old, weary Arthur—a jokeless Arthur this, with a tired expostulation in its innumerable wrinkles, as if he were bored already with every joke his father had ever uttered.

"He's beautifully made. Look at his legs," Mrs. Smith said.

Philippa gently lifted the baby's clothes, and looked at the curly mottled legs: she examined his toes, his arms, his minute hands: it seemed to her wonderful that he should have a finished finger-nail on every tiny finger.

"It's wonderful," she said.

Mrs. Smith smiled, well pleased.

"Gave me a time, the monkey! You won't forget to change the hats about in the window, will you, Miss Hamil-

ton? Raining, isn't it? Will you see that Lilian puts Arthur's slippers to warm this evening?"

Philippa went across to the window and looked out.

"Yes, it's raining."

The strong smell of the fresh-washed curtains came to her. She was glad she had washed the curtains for Mrs. Smith, glad she had put those ridiculous blue bows on them. Her eyes strayed to the chair beside the bed where the baby's basket—all white muslin and blue ribbons—stood. She was glad she had given that to Mrs. Smith, glad she had made more frills and bows than she herself liked.

"Nurse was knocked silly by baby's basket, Miss Hamilton. She says it's just like the one Lady Morgrave had with her first baby—she saw it in an illustrated paper."

Philippa was looking at her earnestly.

"Do you think it's worth it, Mrs. Smith?"

"What? The basket?—oh, me and baby and all? Why yes, my dear, every bit of it! You mean there's plenty without him, the lamb, and precious little to feed them on. We'll manage all right. There's one thing, a baby costs practically nothing the first months. That gives you time to think where you can save a bit here and there, and work harder p'r'aps. You get thinking of his start in life, and his bits of clothes. I've got a pound put by for him already; it was put by as soon as I knew he was coming. Arthur, he gave it me for a new dress. I remember he said: 'Popsy,' he said, 'did I marry a lady or a rag-bag?' You know his witty way. I did need it badly—I know that, and I started off that evening to have a look at the shops. It was that evening when Mr. Brent had fetched you to go to a concert, and I couldn't make up my mind between purple and green, I remember, so I came home without buying it, and before I'd decided, I knew this young gentleman was coming, so the pound was put by for him."

"It was very good of you."

Mrs. Smith laughed.

"Oh, bless you, no, it wasn't! You'll know some day it comes easier to put by for the children than to spend money on yourself, my dear, it's just nature. Why, a tabby cat'll do as much for her kittens."

"There was the pain too," Philippa said thoughtfully.

"Oh—that. Well, that's soon over, and you can't expect to get anything for nothing in this world," opined Mrs. Smith cheerfully. "They make a lot of fuss about it nowadays, but you ask any woman whether she'd have it altered so that the man bore the children, and you'd see her flare up at the very idea of such a thing! She'd be as jealous of her rights as a tiger!"

Philippa's mind was working back over the last weeks of sickness and scarce food, of anxiety and overwork, yesterday and its pain. Her eyes returned to Mrs. Smith's cheerful face on the pillow.

"They're worth it all, bless 'em!" Mrs. Smith said, and kissed the baby's red head loudly.

"The postman is coming along the street," Philippa said, and wondered whether there would be a letter from Dick.

"My nightdress looks all right, doesn't it, Miss Hamilton? Arthur said when he saw me: 'Ho, Smart Set, eh? I'm off to buy a pair of silk pyjamas trimmed with Valencense.' You know his way. Don't let Lilian drink up the cocoa, will you? And she's not to have any pickles with her dinner to-day."

The postman had stopped at the stationer's next door.

"Very well. Isn't there anything else I can do?"

"You might take that bit of coal off the fire; it hasn't caught yet, and we can do with a smaller fire. Coal's terribly dear. If it wasn't for baby I wouldn't have one at all."

"But it's so cold."

"Oh, yes, and I'm not sure that I could bring myself to go without it. It's a sort of sign somehow—I've never had a fire up here except for that—nothing else is important enough. It's a comfort. Makes you feel sort of comfortable

—same as sitting in a pew at Church with your best clothes on somehow."

The baby gave a thin little mew like a cat, and Mrs. Smith began rocking her arm and hissing.

Philippa laid the smoking piece of coal in the fender. She heard a double knock on the private door.

"There's the postman," she said.

"There's nurse coming. You'd better go, Miss Hamilton, or she'll say I've been talking too much."

"Oh, have you?"

"Oh, no, not a bit of it, but they always say it if you're talking to anyone but themselves, it's a part of their work."

Philippa went out into the passage, and downstairs to the letter-box. There was a letter for her addressed in Dick's neat handwriting. She took it out, and stood looking down at it. She had been anxious to hear from him; had grown more and more dissatisfied with the memory of their meeting yesterday. It seemed to her there had been a sort of callousness in it, a skimming of things, unworthy of their friendship. She had gone over again and again their old friendship; had taken from its box his letter in which he had set her mind at rest about her father's death. Her heart had warmed to him. . . .

The shop-bell rang, and she went with the letter in her hand to serve a customer who looked at, criticised, and tried on many hats, and went away with the remark that she thought she'd see what Green & Plummer's had before she decided.

Philippa went into the little room behind the shop and, sweeping bits of velvet, silk and a half-trimmed hat from a chair, sat down and opened her letter.

A thought arrested her: it was the memory of the romantic love letters he had written to her a few months ago. She tapped the folded note paper thoughtfully against the table. It seemed queer to think that Dick had written those letters. This one—she glanced down at it and frowned—no, she knew she need not fear; that love of his

had been a boy's fantastic love for the unattainable. She mused, without bitterness, on the rapid evaporation of his love, once its object had become, possibly, of attainment. But she wanted his friendship. . . .

She unfolded the letter and read it through: it was a short letter. When she had finished it she put it back into its envelope, slipped it into her pocket, and picked up the half-trimmed hat from the floor. She began to stitch at the folded silk band. Dick had altered. She folded the band round the hat, pinned it into place, and went on stitching. She had lost his friendship. She was sorry. Parts of his letter kept flashing across her mind. "You in those horrible surroundings! Casting me off because a woman was going to have a baby. What good were you doing there, Phil? And I wanted you so badly." To this, selecting a steel buckle from a box of old buttons and such things her mind said clearly: "If you wanted me so badly, Dick, you would still want me."

But he did not want her—not now. That was what he had written to tell her. He told her very plainly: "I shall go back to Paris. I have realised once and for all that you have nothing to give me."

She sewed the buckle down strongly. That was unworthy, and not true: she had a good deal to give him, a big friendship. She was sorry he had said that.

The shop-bell rang, and she went in to serve a small girl, who said: "Ma sent me to buy a nat, please, dark blue, wot won't show the dirt, 'arf-a-crown, Miss."

Philippa took a good deal of time and trouble to find a hat that really suited the eager little face. Then she went into the kitchen, and made Mrs. Smith a cup of bovril. After a while she went back to her hat, and finished trimming it.

There was one part of his letter that troubled her: "You have not taken long to forget me, Phil. Were you offended because I didn't rush to you directly I heard what a cur Mike had proved himself? Can't a woman ever understand

that business *has* to be attended to? All these weeks I have been kept from you. And when at last I can get away, how am I welcomed?"

It troubled her with a vague sense of falseness: there was in that a note not quite, to her, straightforward.

She looked out through the dull glass of the window, and thought. Her thought was not at all harsh; she felt so much older than he; her thought was pitiful. But, in a sense, it was relentless: she was being true to herself in that she did not now waste regret on her reception of him yesterday. That, to her, was a small thing, a thing only of importance inasmuch as it had shown to her his mind with regard to herself. If it had not been that, it would presently have been something else. She was too direct herself to care for a thing that had to be propped up by "ifs." She did not once think: "If I had welcomed him more kindly he would not have written like this." "If Mrs. Smith's baby had not been born just then. . . ."

She was sorry. She went through the business of the day with a feeling of loss. She had always hoped he would come to her with friendship, his brief love a forgotten madness.

Anne wrote from her cottage begging her to come and stay. She was appalled at her shrinking from the idea. She realised that she was not nearly so strong as she had thought. She wrote plainly to Anne: "Don't ask me. I could not face the country just now. Let me work it out here in my own way." And from that went on to a gay description of the supper she had given in honour of the new baby who was to be called Philip after herself.

She was striving very hard to discipline her mind: she had not been taught to do it; to her mother the words would have had no meaning. She found as the wonderful Spring days bloomed and tired her, a thought coming again and again. "What next?" She knew she could not look forward yet with safety; knew that the only way for her was to go on from day to day, cramming all the work she could

do into each hour as it came. She found that the exaltation she felt in the greatness of her love was an unstable thing, a thing changeful and apt to fail her when most she needed its help. There were times—and many times—when she told herself fiercely, sullenly that she would go back to him as his housekeeper if he would have had her. . . .

And would stare bitterly at her reflection in the mirror: "You are too ugly to be wanted even for that!"

Isabella came into her room once when she was looking at herself like that.

"Isabella, I am ugly!"

"You are very beautiful. I never tell anyone how beautiful I think you are, Miss Hamilton, 'cause you told me I mustn't talk about you, because you're so wonderful."

Philippa was not heeding. She went and stood by the open window, looking out over the roofs. From the street below came the noise of London; above, the sky was glowing pink through a smoky haze of gold.

"*I* shall never be beautiful," Isabella said.

"Don't want to be, don't wish it. I'm glad I'm not." To herself she breathed: "It's true. Not that sort of love. Better none."

Tears trickled down Isabella's long nose.

"May Anderson says you won't like me for long, 'cause I'm too ugly. She says you wait till a gentleman comes along, and she won't look at you. I said Mr. Brent was a gentleman, and she said: 'I s'pect he chucked her, that's why she come back to your old shop!' And I scratched her nose. I wish I hadn't."

"No: scratching is horrid, Isabella."

"I'd cut my nails this morning: I wish I'd left the scratching till next week."

"Isabella, shall we go for a walk? A long walk?"

They went out, and walked. Taxis whirled past them, with laughing women in pretty clothes, and men like Dick. A few perhaps like Brent. Some of them were glorified with the pink glow from the sky. Philippa thought of

herself a year or two ago: her heart ached: she was desperately sorry these men and women no longer filled her with envy. She wanted to want to be happy again, but she could not.

"When I'm grown up I shall save up my money to go with a gentleman in a taxi," Isabella said.

"You want it terribly?"

Isabella nodded, her eyes glittering.

"I want it mor'n anything!"

Philippa's sick thought was: *"I* want to want it more than anything too!"

Flowers everywhere. Piccadilly Circus a glowing dream; the scent of all the Spring flowers! The women in the taxis all had flowers. Talk, laughter, beauty. . . .

"Isabella! Isabella, we must do something! What shall we do?"

"Could you afford an ice? Oh, wouldn't it be lovely to go and have an ice each? I've got threepence."

A strangled, choking laugh in her throat, Philippa turned up Regent Street, the child's hand in hers. And now another thought had come to her: she was possessed by the certainty that presently she would see Michael. Her eyes were here, there, everywhere: she cared for nothing but to see him, had no thought beyond that. "It's telepathy," she said, explaining her sudden thought to herself. "He has just thought he will presently see me." And remembered on one or two occasions that they had had the same thought at the same moment. His upward look, his smile, raised brows, "Telepathy, eh?" She hugged it to her. No scoundrel he then surely? Even scoundrels must forget their *rôles* at times, and be simply human, kindly. . . .

"Who's that gentleman in the lovely clothes, Miss Hamilton? Won't the ices be *very* dear here?"

"Sixpence, Isabella, but so creamy. I'm paying. Shall we sit at this table?"

"Oh, please, *might* we go to that one next the lady

and gentleman? Then I can listen to what they're saying."

Most of the tables were empty: it was getting late.

"Miss Hamilton," the lady said, " 'Oh, if a cat like that scratches, it's poisonous!' Did you know a cat ever poisoned you?"

"You'd like cakes too, Isabella?"

Her eyes were fixed on the entrance. She heard voices drawing near. Was it Michael? Two girls came in laughing: "Oh, coffee! I'm bored to extinction. I must get waked before to-night."

To-night? Would to-night—or any night—in that sense—never again mean anything to her? She wanted it so! She wanted it to mean the old excitement, the old happiness. That night at the play . . . and afterwards when Michael took her back to the others to supper at the Savoy. . . .

"Miss Hamilton, do you see how he pokes his head forward, and stares up in her face? Why doesn't she blush, Miss Hamilton?"

"Perhaps he's her brother."

Wouldn't she enjoy supper at the Savoy now? She had enjoyed those things before she met Brent. Why not now?

"Why don't you eat your ice, Miss Hamilton? I wish mine wouldn't melt in my mouth so quick—it won't last long. I've eaten twopennorth already."

She took a spoonful of her ice. More people came in, she heard them, waited motionless. A woman and a boy, a nice boy, a little like Dick.

"He's very young to be her young man, isn't he, Miss Hamilton? What a lovely dress, but mustn't her neck be cold? Why don't you eat your ice, Miss Hamilton?"

Presently she rose: she felt suddenly sure that it would not be there she should see Michael. At the entrance she missed Isabella, looked back, saw her scooping out the ice cream she had left.

"You'd left quite threepennorth, Miss Hamilton. Where are we going now?"

"I don't know—somewhere."

"It's fun! I'm having a lovely time."

She walked on rapidly, her eyes always ahead, to the right, the left, scanning the faces in the taxis, the hansoms, the broughams.

Isabella panted along beside her.

"What are you in such a hurry for?"

She said it three times, at the third repetition Philippa heard, absorbed it, stopped abruptly, and stood, her white face suddenly red. She turned and made her way slowly back along Oxford Street.

"I'm not," she said.

"You *seemed* in a hurry. Were you looking for someone? This is how your head was going." Isabella moved her head this way and that. "Don't you wish a gentleman would come along, and take you for a ride in a taxi, Miss Hamilton?"

Did she wish it now? Why didn't she? Her colour came and went: she faced her thought—she had been hunting Michael. She was stung; hot tears smarted in her eyes; her throat went dry.

Isabella peered up at her inquisitively.

"You *do* look beautiful. Did you see how that gentleman stared at you? *I* smiled at him. I thought p'r'aps he'd take us for a ride in a taxi, or treat us to more ices. Why didn't you smile too, Miss Hamilton? Why are we going in here? It's a post-office."

"I'm going to send a telegram, Isabella."

She wrote out her telegram quickly: "Can I come to you for a week at your flat Philippa," and handed it to the girl.

She said in a tired voice:

"We'll go home now, Isabella."

"I've had a lovely time. I didn't read your telegram, Miss Hamilton."

"No."

"Well, Gladys would, so 'ud Ferdy. *I* didn't."

"Aren't you tired, Isabella?"

"Rather not! Are you, Miss Hamilton?"

"Very."

"I *could* of seen what you wrote on the paper if I'd liked."

"I suppose you could."

"Quite easy I could. I *could* of seen quite easy, Miss Hamilton."

"Isabella, we must take an omnibus back. It's too far to walk."

"I like a 'bus. I love the smell and the jolting, don't you? It tickles you. S'pose we smash into a taxi, or run over an old man. Don't you love a motor-bus, Miss Hamilton?"

"I loathe them, Isabella."

"Oh! Well, of course I puf*fer* a taxi myself. Is this the one? Shall I go up first?"

Philippa looked down wearily on the traffic, as they shook and rattled and bumped and raced on their way. Why did people speak of London as sad? Sad! It was so gay as to pull at your very heart; so full of light and gaiety and beauty that it hurt and cut at you. Hurt and cut far deeper when you found that you didn't want its gaiety and beauty than when you wanted them, and could not have them. That seemed queer. . . .

"Miss Hamilton, d'you know I *could* of seen what you wrote on the paper as easy as nothing!"

"You want to know what it was? Well, I want to enjoy myself, Isabella, to put on pretty frocks, and drive in taxis, and go to the play——"

"Like the ladies and gentlemen we saw this evening?"

"Yes, like them. So I wired to Miss Forsythe, who is coming back to London in a day or two, to know if I could stay with her and have a lovely time. Oh, such a time I'll have, Isabella, flowers and music and fun! I'm going to

enjoy myself. Do you hear? To enjoy myself! It's such a long time since I've had a good time, isn't it, Isabella? Oh, such a gay time it will be! . . ."

"Here's the man with the tickets. May *I* pay? Oh, give me the money, and let me take the tickets, Miss Hamilton."

As they neared the Prince's Road, Isabella's sharp little voice asked a question. "If you're going to have such a lovely time, Miss Hamilton, why d'you look so miserable about it?"

## CHAPTER XXIX

ANNE did her best. She gave Philippa all she could: she thought out the week, and the week's amusements very carefully. She went to considerable trouble to get together interesting people for her to meet. Philippa was very grateful: she insisted on her gratitude, and at that Anne sighed. She took her week's gaiety with a characteristic thoroughness; she missed nothing, cut nothing short. She met Harry St. Orme again, and thought he was like a lady novelist's hero, or rather, like what one means when one uses that phrase, which hardly applies nowadays. He said: "You ran away from me." She thought amusedly how surprised he would be if he could know that he was speaking literal truth. She looked back on herself, and marvelled. She knew now that, had he made love to her all day long she would never have cared for him. He did not make love to her now. Anne said afterwards:

"Did Harry make love to you?"

"No."

Anne frowned.

Philippa smiled.

"They're unruly, aren't they, Anne? All of them."

Anne said curtly.

"Don Juan himself couldn't flirt with a pretty frock draped round a Sphinx."

It amused Philippa.

"I'm getting quite interesting evidently."

"We're going to see Marie Tempest to-night. You like her."

"I adore her. I shall love it."

"And supper at the Savoy afterwards." Anne watched her.

"Delightful!"

"A box," Anne said, and still watched her.

"It will be like that other night—do you remember?—when we had a box at the Lyric. You and I and Michael and Norman Ford."

"I suppose you're the result of your mother's and father's temperaments with your own strong originality and civilisation covering it all," Anne said.

Philippa quoted frivolously:

" 'Which is pretty, but I don't know what it means.' "

In the box that night her mind went back with tiring persistency to that other night. As on that night she had searched the stalls in dread of meeting Dick's eyes, now she searched—searched for Michael.

The man beside her was an interesting man: this fact she repeated to herself many times. The other fact of which she kept reminding herself was that Marie Tempest was wonderful. She managed, with these two facts, to bend her mind to the stage, and, in the intervals, to the great author beside her, with a fair amount of success.

Between the second and third acts the author said smiling: "The hero's funking the consequences!"

Philippa jumped: a voice roared in her ears—not this man's voice—Brent's: "A man who'd do a big thing like that would never shirk the consequences."

For a while that sentence clamoured over and over again: she sat, pale and still, waiting for what she wanted: it came, not roaring, not clamouring, clear and quiet: "A thing like that is apt to wash the subtleties away. Ever noticed the million little curls and lines a rippling outgoing tide leaves on the sand? Let the wind freshen a bit—one big wave comes in, goes out—you'll find all those intricate little patterns, all the tide marks gone, and a clean wash of sand left."

She remembered every word. It was true. It was what

had happened to her. Her mother's dying words, her own fear of love, her longing for happiness, her father's death, her friendship with Dick, her fleeing from Harry St. Orme, those and all other things were the million little curls and lines—the tide marks—and her love for Michael was the big wave. . . . Only the clean wash of sand felt bare and lonely: it was necessary to begin to try to make fresh patterns. . . . Presently her thought was: "The man who said those things is a scoundrel. That is queer."

And again:

"A big thing"—yes—but this was, in that sense, so little a thing, so mean. . . . "If a sin's worth doing—a big enough thing—he wouldn't look back"—but this was so pitiably little. . . .

And the man who had said these things was a scoundrel. . . .

Norman Ford joined them at supper. Philippa ate, waiting for him to mention Brent. He had got to strawberries and cream before it came: "Haven't had supper here for ages. I believe the last time was with you two, and—what's his name—Brent. Haven't seen anything of Brent for a long while. Know where he is, Anne?"

"No, I haven't the least idea."

"He was writing a book, wasn't he? Interesting chap. I always feel he might do something big. Do you feel that, Miss Hamilton?"

"Bad or good?"

"Oh well—either—I think that's immaterial. These strawberries are delicious. Anne, how are your strawberry beds coming on down in Sussex?"

Philippa ate strawberries: her thought, hammering, was: "It wasn't anything big, it was small—horribly small and petty and mean. That's the sort he is. Not big. Little. Cruel and little. Not big."

On the fourth day Anne said gently:

"Would you like a rest? You look tired."

"Our concert this afternoon will rest me."

"I mean—give this up?"

Philippa was startled.

"But—but why, Anne? I've had such a lovely time. You've been so awfully——"

"Yes," Anne said. "Well, we'll go on to the end of the week."

Philippa was wistful, hurt.

"I'm a little tired, that's all. It's been so lovely. I think I'm a little out of practice for so much gaiety, that's all."

"Yes, my dear, that's all."

Once she asked her if she knew what had become of Dick: she had written and received no answer. Philippa told her that the last she had heard of him was that he was returning at once to Paris.

"Poor boy," Anne said thoughtfully.

And once Philippa went to her at night to her bedroom.

"Anne, am I being horrid to you? You've done so much—made such a difference in my life——"

"Don't worry, child."

Philippa stood, her arms hung limp at her sides.

"Anne, I will tell you everything you want to know."

"I want to know nothing, Phil. Not yet. Only this—do you wish I had never introduced Michael to you?"

"No, Anne."

Philippa went back to bed.

One day she received a letter from Mrs. Smith: her chief reason for writing was that she wanted to know if Miss Hamilton could remember selling a hat to Mrs. Williamson, and if so, could she trim another the same, because Mrs. Williamson wanted another to send to her sister, and wished it to be trimmed by the French young lady, so that she could mention it when she sent the hat. Mrs. Smith told her all the news. The baby was rather poorly, but didn't cry much. Lilian had been picking again, especially at the pickles. Things were going pretty well, a little French to brighten things up would do no harm. They all

missed her very much, and Isabella wanted to know how many ices she had had. But she was very glad she was having a holiday, as she had looked tired lately with working too hard. And she remained her's turly, Martha Smith.

Philippa wondered why people like Mrs. Smith always wrote turly for truly: she said it to Anne at breakfast.

Anne asked her:

"Are you going back to them?"

"Yes, Anne."

Her mind was reiterating "You look tired lately with working too hard." She realised that that sentence and what it stood for to her was a good deal responsible for her wish to stay at the shabby little milliner's in Prince's Street. "With working too hard." Oh, the blessed relief of the matter-of-fact reason! Never a question asked, never a question looked. She had come back to them evidently having had a bad time: presumably she was discussed occasionally amongst themselves, but for that she cared not at all. And now her pallor, her weariness were put down to overworking. They were so used to that sort of thing in Prince's Street! Most of the women were pale and tired on week days.

Her eyes roved over the charming breakfast table: it seemed to her overstrained nerves that the very kettle was fussily wanting to know what ailed her. Silver and delicate china, fruit and flowers. . . . And in Prince's Street. . . .

People here were so kind. "Are you looking for someone, Miss Hamilton?" "Are you tired?" "Do you feel faint?" "I'm afraid I'm boring you." "Shall we go, there's no need to wait for the end." And: "Are you looking for someone, Miss Hamilton?" Discouraging. Why wouldn't they let her believe for a little while that she was enjoying it all? She *wanted* to enjoy it! To have lost the power of it—— And the ingratitude to Anne. . . .

"Anne, I feel a beast to you!"

"There's no need, child. You've got to work through your own way. It wouldn't be mine, but no one can judge

for another. It's best to follow your instinct. You're not the sort to go under. I can't help you. For one thing, I'm too bewildered. I've known Mike a good many years. I knew he was—well, when he was younger he had the reputation of being rather wild. But this—he must be a *cad.*"

The ugly little word seemed to echo round the charming room, out of place there, spoken as Anne had spoken it.

Anne went on:

"You've got to keep that before you, Phil. If I meet Mike now I shall cut him. You've got to remember that that's the sort of man he is. Unspeakable. A cad. A——"

"Scoundrel," Philippa put in in a curious mechanical sort of way.

Anne looked at her.

"You're sure, Phil? Quite sure there could be no mistake?"

"I've told you—he said so himself."

"Well, then, he's a——"

"I shan't forget, Anne."

And it struck Anne as curious that she should have been made to feel foolish, a little impertinent, by Philippa.

"You've been so good to me, Anne—— You've meant so much. I've always wanted to do something for you. You do things for me, you're always doing things for me. . . ."

And again, presently:

"I help them, Anne. I'm needed there. Things are a little better with them, but still bad. I want you to understand. I'm of some use there. It's bare life, and I'm always tired. Not this sort of tired that keeps one awake through the night. They don't notice, or ask things. It doesn't matter if they do notice, does it? I want you to understand——"

"I think I understand, Phil."

"When I went back to them, they were horribly hard up. They didn't know I'd be anything but an extra expense.

And there was the baby coming soon. But they took me in, Anne—Mrs. Smith was fierce about it. I heard her. They never asked a question. It's—it's like being alone and free, without the solitariness and the time to think. I do want you to understand, Anne." And Anne said:

"I do understand, Philippa. It wouldn't be my way. But you have spoken to me of your mother—Yes, I think I understand."

## CHAPTER XXX

PHILIPPA saw Dick next from the heights of the Upper Circle at Wyndham's theatre. She wondered amusedly what his sensations would be should he look up and see her sitting beside Mrs. Smith in her blue Sunday dress with the neck turned in for the occasion. Their hats were neatly bestowed beneath their chairs, their coats rested on the backs of their seats, Arthur held a large paper bag of cheap chocolates and caramels. Mrs. Smith sat very stiff and spoke in whispers; she studied the people round her and whispered uneasily to Philippa that she did hope she wasn't over-dressed. Philippa, her eye on Dick, assured her she was not: Dick was laughing. . . . It was all very well, but the girl next to Arthur had on an ordinary cotton blouse, and the one next to her a silk blouse with a high neck, and the girl behind Philippa. . . . Mrs. Smith, uneasy, was tucking in her chin in an endeavour to see how much neck she had left exposed. "I do hope my dress isn't too low, Miss Hamilton." Philippa, looking at the extremely modest opening at the throat reassured her. Dick was sketching on his programme: she wished she could see what he was drawing.

"I always disapprove of very low dresses," Mrs. Smith was whispering. A girl came in, and taking off her cloak, showed bare shoulders: Mrs. Smith smiled relieved, and her mind reverted to her baby: she wondered uneasily to Arthur how baby was getting on.

"You've said that twice already, Martha," Arthur responded. His voice was cold: with the providing of the tickets, he had developed a certain autocracy of manner, a somewhat alarming and deferential chivalry. The curtain went up, and Mrs. Smith subsided into silence. When the

conversation on the stage was beyond her comprehension she wondered, in a whisper, how baby was getting on. In the interval she related how little Annie Higgins had once egged her young man on till he had leant forward—it was at a theatre, of course—and asked a young lady whose elaborately and enormously dressed head obstructed Annie's view, if she would mind removing some of her hair. To this Arthur remarked freezingly that he considered it a very ungentlemanly thing to do. Mrs. Smith wondered how baby was getting on, and Philippa, to stop his dignified rejoinder, hastily asked Arthur for a chocolate.

Philippa watched Dick, and she watched the girl beside him: she was annoyed when anything intervened to prevent her seeing them. She knew the tall fair girl with the beautiful hair and soft white shoulders was Enid Hewittson. Dick looked very good-looking, and his manner to her was charming. . . . She watched them thoughtfully, sitting up there in the Upper Circle beside Mrs. Smith.

"Staring down at the ladies and gentlemen in the stalls, Arthur, well, it's where she ought to be, properly speaking."

"I'm sure it's very comfortable here. Miss Hamilton, do you find your seat quite comfortable? Or don't you wish to remain for the rest of the play?" Eulogies of the Upper Circle, more consuming of chocolates—it was very amusing, she thought.

After the second act Mrs. Smith rose to enthusiasm.

"To see him so quiet! His wife telling him she loves the other chap and all, and him just standing there. . . . Oh, wasn't he splendid? That's why I like a gentleman. Arthur now he couldn't stand there like that. . . . Yet you know he's feeling it. Oh, the poor young gentleman! I do like their quiet ways. That Mr. Brent now, that's just how he'd behave, he's that sort. . . . Wonderful, I call it."

Enid Hewittson was yawning: it interested Philippa. The play was a good one, the acting splendid. Wasn't she interested? And wasn't she interested in Dick? She was looking about her, she had a lovely pink cheek. Was Dick

going to marry her? . . . "Arthur now, he'd be hopping about, shouting and going on——"

"You may be my wife, Martha, but you aren't *always* correct in your judgment of my character."

"That girl along there—next to the lady with grey hair—see her, Miss Hamilton? She's got a hook off her blouse at the back. I saw it when she leant forward. Untidy, it looks so bad, doesn't it? In the evening."

"It may have burst off a minute ago," Arthur said with his repressive gallantry.

Dick was speaking to the girl beside him, she glanced along their row of stalls, and her cheek curved in a smile. Philippa's eye wandered in search of the person about whom Dick had said something funny. She was sure he had said something funny about someone. Was it the old gentleman like a parrot? Or the lady in spangles? Or perhaps the young man with the long hair? . . .

"Miss Hamilton, is my hair tidy? I'll pretend to be looking down into the theatre, and you tell me if it's all right at the back."

"Sure? And the lace in my neck? Sure my dress hasn't come out at the back of my neck? I always feel uneasy with such a lot of eyes behind your back. That safety pin don't show, does it? The one where I pinned my dress in at the neck—there, at the back? Thank you." The curtain went up on the third act. "Wish the husband never went off the stage," Mrs. Smith grumbled. "I wonder how baby's getting on."

"The identical same as he was five minutes ago, Martha. Can't you keep quiet? I did think you knew how to behave yourself."

"Here he comes! Hush, Arthur!"

Philippa remembered some words of Dick's: "There's something so decorative about them—charming—just to look at them rests me."

She was like that—this girl. Philippa brooded above them, deep in thought. . . .

"Miss Hamilton, I—I'm going to c-cry, I m-make such a dreadful noise! It's that hus-husband and his quiet ways! The hussy!——"

"It may come all right, Mrs. Smith. Think that it's coming all right."

The girl on Philippa's other side sniffed, and kept patting her hair.

"G-give me a caramel, Arthur—that may s-stop it."

The young man with the girl pulled his collar up, and told the girl not to be silly and get upset, it wasn't real, it was only acting.

People all round them hissed loudly and said "Hush!"

Philippa's attention was drawn to the stage: the husband was standing quietly by the mantelshelf. She found herself wishing wildly that he would shout at his wife, storm, do anything but keep quiet: she dreaded the outbreak of Mrs. Smith's emotion. She had heard it once over the death of a cat. The husband stood there quite quietly, he was lighting a cigarette. . . . Awful choking gurgles burst from Mrs. Smith. "It's the—caramel—teeth stuck—makes it—w-worse——" A voice behind said: "Hush, oh, *hush!*" Mrs. Smith gasped and choked into her handkerchief. The girl on Philippa's other side was breathing loudly. Arthur sat squeezing the bag of chocolates and caramels flat between his hands. The curtain went down: everyone began to grope for hats and coats: the young man said to the girl "Little goose, it isn't *real!*"

Mrs. Smith dropped a flattened caramel beneath her chair and wiped her eyes. "Well, I did enjoy that. I wonder how baby's getting on," she said.

Brushing out her hair that night Philippa was conscious of a sharp resentment: the play had been so good, the acting so wonderful. Why hadn't she wept? Or rather, why hadn't she wanted to weep?

## CHAPTER XXXI

PHILIPPA had wondered, half-way through the hot afternoon, why she had brought them to the Zoological Gardens. The beautiful lioness had looked back at her, wondering too, she thought. Just after that Isabella tugged at her arm.

"Miss Hamilton, there's a gentleman drawing the leopards. May we go and look?"

"No. You can look when we pass."

"Everyone else is stopping to look," Gladys objected. "Grown-up people too!" Philippa turned from her contemplation of the lioness, and looked down the lion house. At first she saw no artist, then the people moving and dividing, she saw a back in grey flannels, a profile now and again turning towards the leopard's cage. It was only a week since she had seen him at Wyndham's: now he was here. She wondered if he were alone. She looked at him thoughtfully.

"Let's go on now, and then we can have a look," Isabella said.

Philippa went swiftly down the house. "Dick," she said.

He looked up from his sketch book, and dropped his pencil. Gladys stooped and picked it up. "Thanks," he said. She giggled and nudged Isabella.

"Are you sketching the leopard?" Philippa asked. "May I look? Is it for a picture?"

"Yes; an allegorical thing—stupid sort of thing. Rotten sketches. He's rather fine, isn't he?"

"Splendid."

She looked at his sketches in silence; animals were not his strong point. He gave a little laugh.

"It's rather refreshing to meet you again, Phil. Why don't you say—'Oh, delightful! Charming. Sweetly pretty!' "

She smiled gravely.

"We're bothering you. Only I should like to see you again, Dick."

He flushed.

"I can't do anything more to-day. I'll come with you now, if I may. Are those beastly kids with you?"

"Yes."

"Well, we've got to get rid of them. I can't stand them, especially the one with the greasy curls."

"There are some friends of theirs here. We'll find them, and hand them over."

"All right, only——" he hesitated. "I mean, will it look bad—for you?"

She looked at him surprised.

"Bad? Really, Dick, I don't see that we need worry about what they may think." She added: "What a queer thing for you to think of. You have altered, haven't you?"

He answered with a curious bitterness. "No, not a bit!"

To Gladys and Isabella she said:

"I want to find Mrs. Higgins and Johnny and Dorothy. We saw them last by the bears, didn't we?"

"Yes," Isabella said mournfully.

"What for?" asked Gladys sharply.

"To hand you two over to them."

"I'd rather stay with you, thank you," Gladys was pert. "We'll walk in front if you'd rather, Miss Hamilton."

A fierce whisper from Isabella.

"If you don't be quiet I'll *tell! You know.*"

The Higgins' were no longer by the bears: the party walked about, searching: they were very silent.

"What horrible legs that biggest girl has," Dick said fretfully once.

And presently he said:

"Look here, I'll give anyone a shilling who finds those Higgs. Go and look. We'll wait here."

"Higgins," Isabella said shyly.

"Will you give it us *now?* To spend here?" Gladys asked.

"Yes. Cut along."

Philippa watched them go doubtfully, but did not speak.

"Let's sit here and watch the dear effielants go by," Dick said heavily.

They sat in silence watching the elephants pad slowly past them.

"I'm sorry you thought I was unkind that day you came to Prince's Street," she said.

Dick pulled the elastic on his sketch book.

"You weren't unkind, not more than I deserved," he said moodily.

She glanced at him thoughtfully.

"I'd like to be friends still."

He laughed shortly.

"Impossible, I'm afraid, Phil, in that hat and frock!"

She looked at him surprised.

"How do you mean?"

For the first time he turned his eyes on hers, and met her gaze fully: his expression was miserable, rueful. "I'm going to marry Enid Hewittson."

"Oh! oh, I'm so glad, Dick."

She sat silent, her brows drawn in thought.

Dick banged his knee restlessly with his sketch book: a passing elephant stretched out his trunk and tried to take it from him.

"I'd let you have it, old chap, it's worth nothing, but I'm afraid it would give you indigestion."

Gladys stood before them breathless.

"I found them! Isabella said she did, but I'm *sure* I called out first. They're down there. We're going to buy some food for the animals."

Dick handed her a shilling.

"I hope I'll never see those legs again," he said.

"It's the high boots," Philippa said perfunctorily.

"The fat calves."

Another elephant went past. Philippa rose.

"I love elephants, but they make me sad. It's the infinite condescending patience of them, I think."

"Come and have some tea."

She poured out tea for him, thinking how queer it was, and on that she spoke.

"Aren't you going to tell me about it, Dick?"

"About what?"

"Your engagement."

"Of course. Well, she's too good for me—that, of course. We're to be married in the autumn, I think. The people who rent my place have got to turn out. My father-in-law is going to give her enough for us to be able to live there again——"

"That's good."

"I'm fond of the place. Enid's made for it. She'll look after the tenants and all that. Picture me growing fat and sleek, very prosperous looking, in immaculate clothes, taking round the plate in Church, Phil."

She looked startled.

"I've heard that—you've said it before." She fell silent, remembering their walk in the rain, his bitterness at his own prognostication.

"Have I? Very likely. I've always known it would be how I should end."

She stared out over the grass to where in his open air cage a lion glared out. A cage. Would Dick be in a cage?

"You've walked in of your own free will," she said gravely.

His eyes had followed hers, his brain her thought.

"And that poor chap didn't. Oh yes, I know that. I'm not asking for pity. I should be a cad to do that. Enid's the best girl in the world. I feel rather cheap, that's all.

Have a piece of this speckled cake, Phil." Presently he said abruptly:

"I've never understood this business about Mike—and you."

"Who told you?"

"My godfather—old Carniford."

She nodded, and crumbled her cake for the sparrows.

"I don't want to talk about it. I hate it. He must be such a rotten cad. It's not the sort of thing any man does—even the wrong 'uns."

"I don't want to talk about it either, Dick, so we won't, will we?"

"I'm sorry. Of course not. Poor little girl."

He pushed his plate and cup aside impatiently, suddenly spread out his arms on the marble top of the table, dropped his face towards them, then jerked it up with a quick look round at the other tables, mostly occupied by family parties, eating as much as they could for a shilling a head.

"Let's get out of this, Phil. I—I can't stand it. Those fools of people all eating."

His blue eyes met hers, beseeching, hurt: a pang shot through her heart.

"We'll go somewhere quiet," she said gently.

Walking behind an elephant she said:

"Aren't we pigmies? Are our troubles pigmy too?"

"When are you going to find somewhere quiet?"

"There's a seat behind the mountain goats. Hardly anyone comes round there."

"I hate those goats, they make such sneering faces at you. I want to talk to you. There's something about you. You'd never have cared for me, if I'd come straight to you, and asked you to marry me, after you left Mike."

"No."

"I'm glad of that. My God, if I weren't sure of that, I'd cut my throat! I'm not in love with you, Phil——"

"Dick, don't say things you'll be sorry for afterwards. You are in love with Enid Hewittson."

"I know. I am. The sort of love for marrying. We shall be happy. But I've got to talk this once. You won't be shocked."

They had reached the seat behind the mountain goats' cage: she sat down, looking at a goat.

"Isn't it just like some people? Cold, sneering, superior —that's the sort I'm going to live amongst, Phil—goat people. Deadly respectable. You'd know a mountain goat's respectable, they couldn't be anything else."

He picked up a clod of earth and threw it at a staring goat: it whizzed past its head, within an inch of it, but the goat stood haughtily immovable.

"The calm repose of a Vere de Vere. Phil, what did you think of my not writing at once? And then writing as I did?"

"That you were full of other interests, and had got over your fancied love for me."

"Gad, you know how to hit out straight. Well, you were wrong. I was much more caddish than that." He paused, balanced his sketch book on two fingers, and said in a more deliberate voice:

"I was afraid of what people would say if I married you."

Her voice, answering, was faintly amused.

"But there never could have been any question of marriage."

"No. But I didn't know that then. At any rate, I wasn't sure."

She was silent, watching the goats. He studied her face.

"I thought it was bound to come out that you'd been living with——"

"I know exactly what you mean. Please don't go into details."

"I beg your pardon."

His face burnt red: he burst out:

"I didn't realise what I was saying, Phil. I was so set on explaining about myself. You see what I am . . ."

"A very foolish boy, who is trying hard to spoil things for himself."

"I was brought up respectable, Phil. Let me tell you that. My father was the old-fashioned sort of squire, and my mother was a little suburban doctor's daughter. Oh, we were sacred to her! Her life was one mass of conventions. I had it drummed into me. I drank it,—ate it—heard everything judged by what people would say, what people would think. When the smash came—speculations—it was the horror of what people would say of my father's speculating that killed her——"

"Why didn't you break away from it?"

"She was very sweet," he said. "And perhaps because it was in my blood. You remember that night—that Christmas Eve? That's why I pretended to Mike that you were an actress—naughty—I've always been a bit of a prig. Sometimes I've wanted not to be badly. I do now. I've always shrunk from anything out of the way——"

"You went to our rooms in Westminster, and questioned the landlady——"

"Oh, no, I didn't. That was Mike. He wouldn't let me tell you, he thought it would hurt you to know he knew about that evening, and your father. That was me too. I told him. I was afraid he'd get spotting things. I blurted it out. He was angry. He said I'd no right to tell him. Then he went and poked about, and found out about your father, and made me write that letter to you. That was why I'd never let you start thanking me."

She said slowly:

"That goat has a lump on its shoulder," and shuddered from head to foot.

"It's nothing bad. How easily you're upset. You're so fond of animals, but you can't like mountain goats!"

"I wish you had told me, Dick. It was wrong to let me think it was you."

"I know. I feel a beast. But Mike insisted, and I was so jolly sorry I'd blurted all that out to him, although

I did do it for you, Phil, honest. I don't feel so beastly over that."

"No," she said. "Michael did it. Michael went to our rooms in Westminster. It was very kind of him, wasn't it, Dick?"

She looked at him with worried, dull eyes.

"Don't you feel well? We're in the sun here now. Shall we move on, Phil?"

"You talk so much. You're like that man who babbled——"

"I'll be quiet. I'm sorry, Phil. There's something about you. If you'd cared for me—I wonder what my life would have been? Married to you—should I have painted wonderful pictures? Grown out of my groove—oh, my God, a man would do anything for you! Phil! Phil——" his voice died away, he stared at her pale profile, his boyish face gone suddenly white and wretched.

"I'm sorry, Phil," he said. "I didn't mean to say it."

Her lips murmured:

"It was kind of Michael, wasn't it?"

He stared at her.

"Haven't you heard what I've been saying?" He took hold of her arm and shook it. "Haven't you heard what I've been saying?"

"Oh yes. You said that Michael went and poked about and found out about my father——"

"Oh, do be quiet!"

"Yes, let's be quiet. It's much nicer."

They sat on there in the sunshine, silent: some children came and offered bread to the disdainful goats: the sparrows flew twittering to pick up the crumbs they dropped. The silence was pierced by shrieks and roars of animals, by the voices and laughter of children.

"I suppose you think I was just trying to get up a vulgar flirtation with my uncle's wife," Dick's sullen voice broke the silence.

"What did you say?"

He repeated it.

"Oh, no."

"What do you think then?"

"That you liked me, and thought it was romantic, so fancied you loved me. You always harped on your expecting nothing of me in return, you know." She smiled faintly. "Of course that was to safeguard the conventions."

The colour leapt to his face, dyed his forehead, his eyes blazed; he sprang to his feet. Then he spoke dully.

"I suppose—it was."

The colour died away, his eyes grew wretched. She rose and laid her hand on his arm.

"It was naughty—enticingly naughty—without being in the least risky," she said. "Poor old Dick."

"Lord, I fancied myself in those days. I was gloriously happy. That's the sort you are, Phil."

They moved slowly away from the goats.

"I saw her once at Wyndham's with you, Dick, she looked very lovely."

"Did you? Had she got on a blue frock?"

"No, pink."

"Oh, you should see her in a soft shimmering blue and gold thing she's got. Remember how I tried to paint you, Phil? Rotten thing. No one but Sargent could paint you. Phil, that day I came to that hole in Chelsea—I came to ask you to marry me. Then I knew you'd never care. I'd known it all along really."

"We can be friends, can't we, Dick?"

"Perhaps—when you're eighty—No, you'll be a fascinating old lady, Phil."

But she smiled.

"In a few weeks," she said.

He caught at her hand.

"Why do you want to be friends? Phil, with you I see myself clearly: it's an ugly picture——"

She looked up into his miserable boy's face.

"In a few weeks," she repeated gently.

"Phil—oh, Phil, what a good sort you are! Look here," his voice was hoarse. "I'll be worth it—I will—you'll see."

"Yes," she said. "I shall see."

## CHAPTER XXXII

THE baby was wailing: it had been wailing all the morning; since six o'clock it had been wailing. It came to Philippa, trimming hats in the hot little room behind the shop, in a thin, continuous trickle. She drove her needle in and out at a furious rate, and with an exhausting energy: she knew that the wail had got on her nerves, and she was trying to defy them. Now and again a customer had to be served, but that shrill trickle of sound penetrated to the shop: she had no rest from it. Once in a frenzy of pity for Mrs. Smith she went upstairs, and entered the room where the baby cried. Mrs. Smith sat, wide-lapped, the baby on its stomach lying across her knees. Mrs. Smith was writing a letter with her right hand, while she thumped the baby's back with her left. She looked up as Philippa entered. "Was it Miss Dickens or Miss Jones who bought the red and white hat yesterday? The one with the cracked buckle. I'm telling my sister about it."

"Miss Dickens."

The thin trickle of sound had swelled, on proximity, to a shrill howl. Philippa stood shrinking back against the door, her eyes on the baby's feebly-reared head, as it fought against its defenceless position.

"Is he very bad?"

"Eh? Baby? Oh, no, bless him. It's his stomach. I had to give him some fig syrup this morning. It'll soon go off."

"Does he like lying like that?"

The baby was protesting pitifully with red, fiercely-creased face, and desperate waving arms and legs.

"I expect so, bless him."

"It's very hot," Philippa said. "You've onions for dinner."

"Yes: Irish stew. Are you hungry already, Miss Hamilton?"

"No, oh, no."

She went slowly down the stairs: she felt suddenly that almost she could have welcomed the smell of blackbeetles, so long only as it should dispel the onions. The trickle of sound followed her. She sat down in the stuffy little room: it was unbearably hot: she went on trimming the hat. She was trimming it with red roses; suddenly a memory of the red bush roses in her old Cornish home came to her: unconsciously she raised a rose to her face, then flung it down and got up, and stood, her hands over her ears. Through her fingers, the thin trickle of sound pierced, on and on. . . . Or was it only in her own brain, fixed for ever there? She dropped her hands, and hurried upstairs again.

"Mrs. Smith, I want to go to Victoria Station to see Miss Forsythe off!"

"Very well, Miss Hamilton. I'll come down to the shop. Will you be in time?"

"Yes," Philippa was in a breathless hurry: she ran to her room, put on her hat hastily.

When she reached Victoria she had half an hour to wait before Anne's train was due. Anne was going down to her cottage for the week-end. She went nearly every week, and Philippa never yet had come to see her off. She had wanted an excuse for her fleeing from that trickle of sound, wanted it for herself, to help her fight her nerves. She waited for Anne, walking up and down. She remembered how once a big station had excited her; there had seemed such possibilities in it, the very noise of the trains, the clangings, the luggage, she had delighted in. She looked and listened now wistfully: she thought: "I have grown very old."

Anne's train awaited her: its engine was emitting the most ear-splitting scream; porters were hurrying along with bags in their hands; at one or two windows little groups of people stood talking. In two minutes the train would slide out of the station. Anne would miss it.

A late couple came hurrying along the platform: an old lady and Brent.

Philippa saw them coming, saw Brent open a door and help the old lady in, saw him turn and look out. . . .

His eyes swept the platform, met hers. . . .

He jumped down, and came towards her: she went to meet him, dead white and steady. She lifted her eyes to his:

"I don't believe it," she said.

"What don't you believe?"

She gave a little wavering smile.

"I—don't know, but I don't."

"Good God!" he said hoarsely.

The guard whistled: the old lady was signalling frantically to Brent. "I must go. Child, it's true. I must speak to you. Back to-morrow. Not that ghastly place. Come to my sister's—will you? Morrow afternoon," he had seized her hand, wrung it.

The train was sliding out of the station: he leapt into his carriage: called something out. She ran alongside.

"What? What?"

"Except the dog!" He was smiling. "Boy beat the dog—I beat the boy!"

It came floating back to her: already a new note in his voice, in his eyes a hint of—what? Was it mastery? Or—

Her heart was pounding, all her nerves and pulses were thudding: she heard the roar all round her of express trains, the platform rocked. . . . She sat down on one of the long seats. "Boy beat the dog—I beat the boy!" It rang in her ears. "Boy beat the dog—I beat the boy!" She steadied to a grave dissection of this: the boy, she thought, had been cruel, and not only that, he had lied. He was a wicked boy. And she had been unjust and had accused—What was that look in his face? . . . The boy had beaten the dog. She was glad. And he had beaten the boy. She was glad he had done that too. Why had he looked at her like that? Why? And that babbling voice—long ago—what had it meant? . . . The boy——

A woman stopped in front of her and spoke. An unreasoning, shrinking terror seized her: this woman was prying, striving to know . . . to know. . . .

"Can you tell me which platform the 1-10 to Winchingford goes from?"

Philippa answered quietly that she was sorry she did not know. The woman hurried after a porter: Philippa's thought now was: "I've got to be calm."

It helped her when the realisation came to her that she could not remember his sister's London address. This was a poignant difficulty which needed much working out. She had seen it once on an old letter in his study—what was it? It was a square—she remembered that, and it began with a B—— no, with an S. And once he had said: "Carstairs has some splendid old engravings of ships in his house in——"

In where? In what square? They had been walking back from Tregarra, from a sail—a glorious sail with a rough sea, and a gale blowing up from the west . . . A scoundrel? She laughed. "Feels good, eh, Philippa?" And wet strands of hair blowing against her cheek. . . . He had looked vigorous, full of life—and just now there had come into his face something of the same look. . . . What was it? She felt curiously breathless and light, rather as she had felt sometimes in dreams when her feet had refused to stay on the ground. . . . It was a *fighting* look—that was it. She rose hurriedly and left the station, walking fast. It was not only a fighting look. . . . She walked on, her step swift and light; she saw everything—the people, the traffic, shops, houses—with a curious, almost flaming distinctness, yet, once past, she could have recalled no single thing she had seen. She picked up a crying, fallen child, smoothed his clothes, and handed him to his nurse, but she did not know presently that she had done it.

It was in Trafalgar Square that full realisation and understanding of what the look in his face had meant, came to her.

She gathered it to her, unafraid. . . .

## CHAPTER XXXIII

She had remembered the Square, and the number. It was a very hot afternoon, and London was very dusty: of course, it was nearly August, that was why it seemed emptier. She supposed most of these tall houses in Wharton Square were empty now. She went on supposing things like that as she drew near No. 16. She walked up the steps behind two ladies who were talking very volubly. One was assuring the other that she was nearly dead with the blues, London at this time of the year would make Peter Soames himself sad. The other, always only a word or two behind, was declaring that old Peter adored London in *August!* Philippa counted up to thirty-six buttons on one of the frocks, then found herself worked into a crowded scented room, her name cried with two other names. She came to a stop just to the right of the door, wedged there with the two ladies with whom she had entered. She wondered where her hostess was, and dared not look, lest she should see Brent.

"Her afternoons are always such a success. Even at this time of year. I can't think why," some one said.

"Well, of course she's peculiar."

"Oh, but so is everyone nowadays. It would be much more original to be ordinary."

"Well, she treats us all with scorn, more or less, dropping out altogether when the fancy takes her. Perhaps it's that."

Philippa raised her eyes, and scanned the room: she wondered what Mrs. Smith would think of some of the hats. She could not see Brent: but then she could not see more than half the people. But she felt sure he was not there: she began to experience a feverish, restless impatience.

She fell to counting buttons again. She marvelled over his choice of a place in which to talk; "Teddie Carstairs is coming home next week. *Then* she'll have to cease her pranks!"

"Not she! She'll send him away again."

Philippa was very tired: she began to have a horrid fear that she might faint. She decided that she would sooner faint for ever than go away. Moving on, or being moved on slowly, she found herself in front of an empty chair, and sank into it. "That was awfully neat!" a tall girl in a chair next to it, said. "Like my salts?"

Philippa sniffed gratefully.

"Isn't it frightfully hot in here? Feel better?"

Philippa handed the bottle back to her. The crowd in front moved, opened a little, she caught sight of the woman with the golden hair, the great brown eyes—the woman who had been in Cornwall—the woman who, the babbling voice had said, was living in the south wing . . . Priscilla. . . . She put her hand up to her eyes; the people were whirling in little coloured dots, like confetti at a wedding—blue—green—red—yellow—white. . . .

"Who is that?" she asked the tall girl.

"That creature in pink?"

"No. In green. There—with gold hair—by the table——"

"Oh, that, the old lady in lace? That's Mrs. Townshend. She has the most wonderful lace. It's a pity she doesn't show it off better, it would look a hundred times as well with blue as with that horrible green, and with decent white hair, instead of that gold wig——"

Philippa was swallowing back hysterical outcries: after a while she said quietly:

"I meant the young one. Behind Mrs. Townshend. In pale green."

"That? Why, she's your hostess! That's Mrs. Carstairs."

Her thought spun, "Michael's sister! His sister."

Behind it there beat a strained wonder how much longer she could wait to know—to understand—to see Michael alone. The wonder hurt her, set her nerves quivering: she was crying out to Michael. She was afraid what she might do. She tried to think of something else; she found herself saying over and over again: "The boy beat the dog; I beat the boy. The boy beat the dog; I beat the boy."

That began at last to make her feel sick and faint. She spoke to the tall girl.

"She's very lovely, isn't she?"

"Um, no, distractingly pretty."

The thing was still thumping in her ears: "The boy beat the dog; I beat the boy."

The tall girl added musingly:

"I believe she's an awful good sort—quite mad, of course, but—isn't it queer? She *doesn't* look quite—well, quite respectable, does she? That hair's *quite* natural, and her eyelashes too. It's really rather a misfortune, isn't it? And she wears such queer clothes. You know, she has *no* taste. She leaves it all to the dressmakers and milliners. Of course she's an awful crank."

"Is she interested in ghosts?" Philippa's voice was dull, toneless.

"Oh, perfectly mad on them! She's been living with her brother in a horrible haunted house down in some forsaken place in Cornwall, prowling about at night in the hopes of meeting some ghosts. I wonder what that note is the maid's handing her. She looks quite upset. You look awfully bad. Salts?"

"I'm afraid—I'm going to——"

"Faint? I'm sure you are. I'll get you out of this."

"I don't want to go. Please."

"Oh, all right."

Philippa was trembling: she rose: she must find Michael.

"Oh, *there* you are, Miss Hamilton. I've been searching for you. Do come with me, will you?"

Philippa found herself following the lady with the golden hair: it was a maddeningly slow progress, interrupted it seemed to her by every person they passed. Her brain, sick with suspense, received a confused jumble of talk. . . . "Mike's in a howling rage. He has sent me such an awful note. Oh, are you going? Shan't I see you again before you leave town? Later perhaps at Leightonshaw. Good-bye. You were to be shown straight to him, you know. A mistake. I'm *sure* I never shook hands with you. My dear Molly, that frock is delightful. Did Mellifant make it? How clever of you to be able to walk in it. He guessed what had happened somehow. Back again in a moment, Tom. Go and talk to Molly Seymour, there's a dear boy. . . ."

At last they were in the hall and free from the crowd.

"Isn't it cool out here? You look ill—much paler and thinner than you were in Cornwall." She gave a little amused laugh. "I used to peer at you through a crack in the door leading to my prison. What fun it was? I used to pretend I was Edward Rochester's mad wife and you were Jane Eyre. And that duckie dog would come and wag its tail at me. I do love Mike—he's so queer. Come along—up here. You're going to forgive him, aren't you? It was such a mad idea—I'd marry any man for it."

Philippa following her up, stiffly, laboriously, stair after stair, said politely that she must have got very tired of being shut in that wing.

"Oh, it was great fun, only I never saw any ghosts. That is the great passion of my life—ghosts. At the last I tired, because they'd sent me a new shade of pink for a tea-gown, and I could not decide if it suited me. I wanted to ask three men, who are utterly different from each other."

Philippa said it was very hot.

"I'd do more than that for Mike," the plaintive voice took on a new note of earnestness. "And I love prowling in the dark. I wrote a book on ghosts while I was there.

Alders & White are publishing it in the autumn. Here we are."

"On ghosts?" Philippa held the baluster tightly, her eyes glancing rapidly away from the door that had been indicated.

"Yes, such fun! I described the house and rooms and legends—fictitious names, of course—and described my stay there, and made up such *lovely* ghosts. I shall give you a copy. Mike's in there. Do be sweet to him, won't you? He's such a *dear!*"

Philippa stood looking over the baluster watching her descend. . . .

She turned and moved slowly to the door. It opened abruptly and Brent faced her, frowning heavily.

"I think you might have hurried, Philippa."

"I have."

He raised his eyebrows.

"I heard my sister chattering to you. Sit down. What has become of Dick?"

She sat down, and stared up at him gravely

"Was the soup bad, Michael?" she said.

He smiled grimly.

"A bad beginning." He stood over her. "Philippa, are you going to marry Dick?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because neither he nor I desire it."

"Haven't you ever loved him?"

"No."

"Never?"

"No."

"Good God, what a fool I've been! . . . Philippa, I'm going to kiss you. . . ."

He put her from him.

"I've got you now. Nothing matters. But it was all true. I asked poor old Carniford to tell you. Couldn't

face it when it came to it. But you're mine now. Did you find that you missed your master when you'd left, Philippa? Was that it, child? I can't get hold of why you care, or when——"

"I knew before I left you, Michael. And it isn't all true. I've found that out already. Michael, who was Priscilla?"

"You."

"Me?"

"When Anne introduced us I thought she called you 'Priscilla.' Oddly enough I didn't find out my mistake for quite a long time. I used to—but you called me hard names for that."

"But I didn't know it was me."

"You'll despise me. Call me silly. I shan't tell you. You were very blind. You've got lovely hair to stroke. I always knew it would be lovely."

"I don't think it is to be wondered at that I was blind, Michael; you were very cross, weren't you?"

"The old Philippa! Of course I was. What else could I do? You don't understand. It was hell."

"Michael, will you tell me just what you did? Never mind about Mr. Carniford. Did you love me all the time? And your poor sister—*why* did you hide her——"

He interrupted harshly: "Love you? Love you? Good God, yes! That was it. I'd never realised what it would be. I thought I was strong enough. The whole scheme came to me that day in that stuffy little room. You were going to marry the Professor. Beastly old cad. He was. You don't understand. I loved you. You didn't care a brass farthing for me. At first I was mad enough—desperate enough—to mean to marry you, and then woo you. I couldn't do it. You were such a child. I knew you'd be able to love. I wouldn't spoil your chance. I went to Mortimer—that doesn't matter. It was a sham marriage. I hoped—I staked everything on that—that you'd love me. Either way—after a time—I meant to tell

you. I had my sister there all the time. She was your chaperon—d'you see? So that there should be no scandal. I thought I could do it! I failed. D'you understand?"

"I think it was a glorious thing to do!"

He was walking up and down the room: he laughed shortly.

"Not much glory about it. A hard fight. I never could give myself a fair chance, even before Dick found us out. That was hard luck. And then came the fear I'd mucked your life. He's got rum ideas. I was afraid he might fight shy——"

"I know," she said.

"Otherwise he's a decent enough boy,—a bit too decent perhaps. I thought you loved him. It was the doubt of him. Whether I'd mucked your life. I lost my nerve. It was hell, I tell you. I was rude to you. Words of love choked me, I grumbled at the soup! When I couldn't keep my arms from you, I ordered you away. When you looked at me—too much—I was rude to you. Some day you'll understand. It was desperation. Self-defence. I'd got to do it. I was nearly mad sometimes. Look at me. Yes. D'you hear? Look at me. Straight into my eyes. Look at me. D'you think you'll ever understand?" He bent over her, gripped her shoulder, shook it.

"Look at me!" he said curtly.

She bent back her head and looked up at him.

"I understand now, Michael."

He drew her to him, and hid her face against his shoulder.

"Oh, my little one—don't look at me like that—I always knew you could love——" his arms tightened round her, he crushed her to him. "Yes, look at me like that, always. Do you hear! Always. I'll make you happy—mad with happiness—you and me—just you and me—kiss me, my love——"

Presently, whispering:

"Are you frightened, Philippa?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my dear one——"

"I like it."

He laughed out.

"You've not altered a bit! Thank God for that!"

She sat back, looking at him, her shining eyes full of delight.

"It's such a nice laugh," she said. "When you laugh like that, I laugh and laugh inside, but I couldn't laugh outwardly."

And added mischievously:

"I'd have made you a much nicer housekeeper if you'd laughed like that sometimes."

His answer was, out of all proportion, grim.

"You don't laugh in hell."

"As bad as that, Michael?"

"Most times. Except right at first. It grew, you see, grew bigger than me—almost. And then it was the doubt. Doubt's the devil. The fear I'd mucked your life. Struggling on. Throwing you with Dick to make sure. Standing aside. Hell—yes. Remember that play we went to——"

"The night you took me back to the Savoy——"

"How did you know? Well, that chap—I thought he was a fool. I got just like him. Doubting—full of remorse—worthless. And never able to get a real chance—handicapped. And you with your little boy's face sulking at me. Then suddenly smiling on me with that glorious straightness—it goes to a chap's head, Philippa. You don't know. I knew what you'd be to the man who could make you love him. God, I knew. Then I gave in. I saw Dick's long letters to you. When Carniford came down—Dick had told him where I was—I funked it. I told him everything. Made the poor old chap tell you."

Philippa said deliberately:

"He's not a poor old chap; he's either mad or unthinkably wicked."

He smiled.

"It sounds so queer of the poor old innocent. He's awfully bad now. I was going down to see him yesterday when I met you, taking his old aunt down to him."

"What is the matter with him?"

"Trouble with his head. He had sunstroke years ago in India—he's been a bit queer, on and off, ever since."

She spoke very slowly:

"That was it. Only he did it so well."

It was then that Brent got impatient: he wanted to know what her hints and words meant. She was in no hurry to tell him: she had to have time to take it in—the truth at last. Presently she began to fear the effect on him. She told him then, plainly, quietly, and watched his awful anger. He kept saying: "You had to bear that." And again jealously: "These months have been unnecessary. *These months,* Philippa!" He was up and down the room, quiet for the most part: she watched his face appalled, sitting in silence. He began to mutter. "If only he were all right! To horsewhip him!" Once he came to a stop before her. "Am I to do nothing then?"

It was her first chance.

"Yes, Michael. He was not responsible. He is ill, mad."

"But what you've gone through!"

"It is over."

He began to walk up and down again. "It wasn't madness. He worships Dick. He did it deliberately. Can you realise it? Told those lies to you, because he saw you loved me, and he thought Dick wanted you. I see it all. Dick always takes his woes to him. His joys too, when he can swagger over the telling! Carniford loved Dick's mother. He's always been mad about Dick, from the time when he spoilt him as a baby. Once before—when Dick was at Cambridge—he told lies for him, to get him out of some money trouble. He's got no moral sense

where Dick's concerned." He stopped, frowned down at her. "Dick thought he loved you?"

"Oh, in a romantic, aloof sort of way, Michael."

Quickly, jealously:

"You never cared for him?"

"Just as I do now."

"Did he ask you to marry him?"

A faint colour flickered in her cheek. Brent turned on his heel, with a short laugh.

"You needn't answer. What a cur the boy is at heart!"

"No, oh no, Michael! He is going to marry——"

"Moneyed respectability. He's not worth discussion."

"But I want you——"

"To be kind to him. Oh, I'll be kind to him. I can afford to be kind to him. He's too immaterial for anything else. I was mad to think you loved him. An empty thing like that! You! Philippa," he stopped before her again. "Yesterday Carniford kept muttering: 'It's a most unpleasant duty—most unpleasant—but it's for Dick.' And once or twice he said: 'I saw her love in her eyes.' Do you see what he meant? He was cleverer than I. He saw you loved me."

"It's pathetic, Michael."

He laughed, shortly.

"Unpleasant! An unpleasant duty! What a fool I was not to tell you myself. I thought that when I knew you were going to leave me I should seize you in my arms and keep you—keep you always." Another thought came to him. "What made you think his story was false at last?"

"Your face."

He frowned irritatedly.

"What do you mean?"

"Just that. When I saw you at Victoria I knew it wasn't true."

He stood, staring down at her.

"Only that? You refused to believe in face of the fac:

that he had told you, and I had assured you it was true? In face of all the evidence against me?"

"Yes, Michael."

He shot out at her an incredulous:

"Why?"

"I *felt* it wasn't true. I *knew* it was all wrong somewhere. I looked up and saw you coming along the platform smiling down at that old lady, and I knew."

"My—child," he said slowly. He bent and kissed her hand.

"What a thing for a man to live on and work on," he said in a low voice.

"Don't look at me as if I'm a saint, Michael," she said shyly.

"You're better than a saint. You're a perfect woman with a beautiful faith and loyalty——"

"I want to know heaps of things," she interrupted agitatedly. "Your poor sister, yes, your poor sister . . ."

He laughed a quiet little tender laugh.

"Very well. My poor sister then. What of her?"

"I want to know heaps of things. I know a good deal. I know she uses violent scent, and wears blue ribbon on her underclothing, and that her name begins with a P. And that she loves ghosts. But I want to know if she didn't get dreadfully tired of being shut up like that, and—and all about it."

But she did not seem particularly interested in the desultory account he proceeded to give her.

Presently she wanted to know something else. This time she lifted her eyes gravely to his. She wanted to know why they spoke of him as "that sort." What sort? It needed some explanation—"when you've been that sort yourself"—she explained carefully.

He looked into her eyes.

"Well, I haven't," he said.

"I knew you hadn't," was her reply.

And at that she was on a new memory: she leapt to

what he had done for her in going to the rooms in Westminster. And at the last: "But *why* wouldn't you let me know——"

He was tired of explanations. It was: "What eyes! What a mouth!——"

"Michael, don't look at me like that! Someone's coming—singing——"

"It's Patience."

She gave a little happy laugh.

"Patience begins with a 'P!'" she said.

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